JIMI HENDRIX
THE SECRET ARCHIVE

DAVID BOWIE
HIS REBEL STYLE

MOJO

The Music Magazine

151 REVIEWS
NICO, JUDEE SILL
ALICE COLTRANE
THE BEATLES
AND MORE

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

"THERE'S A PSYCHIC ENERGY"

PEARL JAM
TAKE ON THE WORLD

WAYNE KRAMER
MC5's FORCE FOR GOOD

BRIAN WILSON
THE *OTHER* LOST ALBUM

ROXY MUSIC
ART-ROCK FREAKOUT

THE LEMON TWIGS
WIZARDS! TRUE STARS!

ANNE BRIGGS
BRITFOLK WILD CHILD

SHABAKA HUTCHINGS
JAZZ: THE NEW AGE

& FAREWELL
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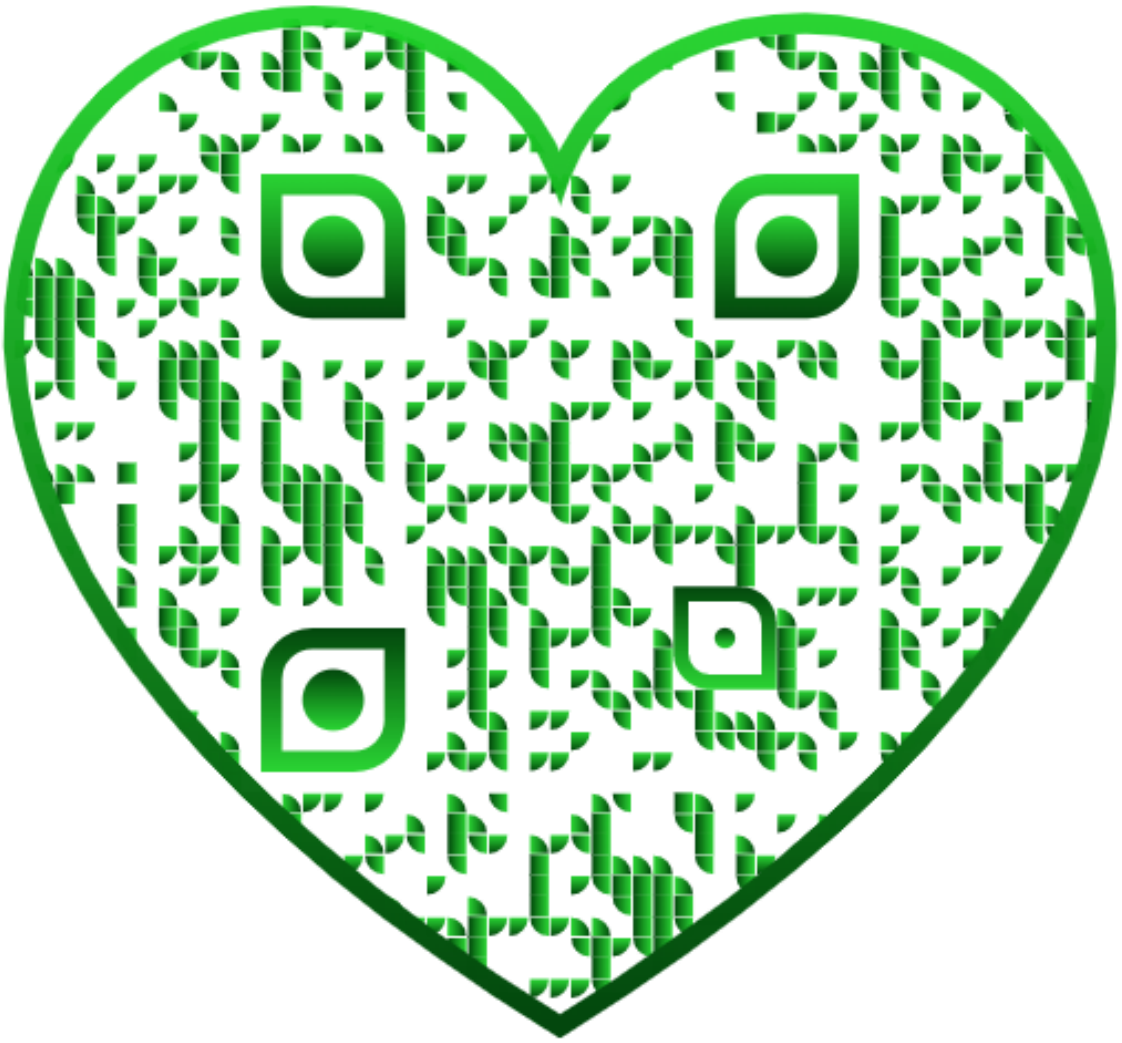
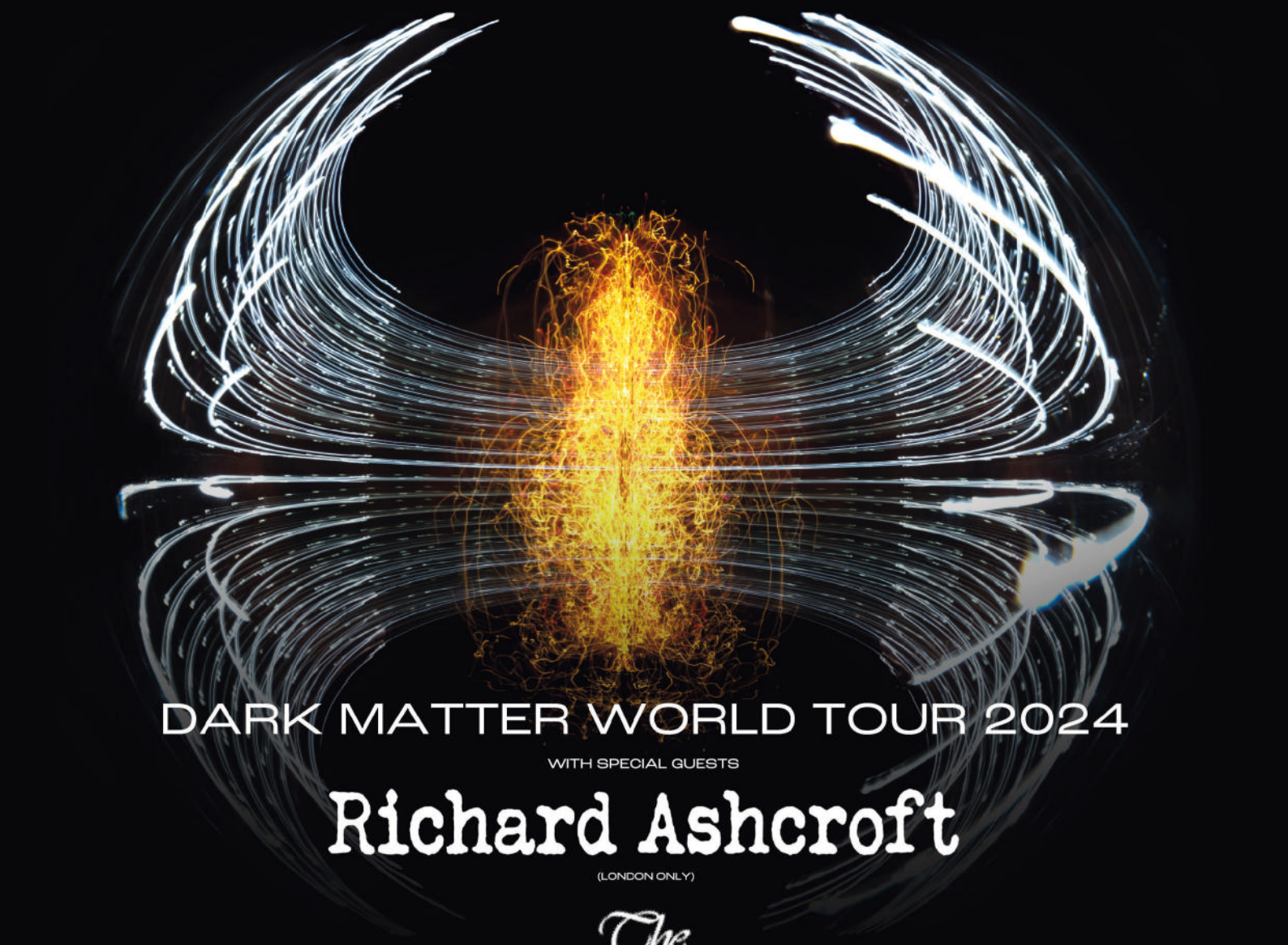


PEARL JAM



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Marc Sharratt/Shutterstock

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Mat Snow

Former MOJO Editor Mat has biographised U2, The Who and solo Beatles, and edited an interviews anthology starring his former lodger, Nick Cave, who repaid his benevolent landlord with a career-peak song, Scum. Having air-guitar'd to Roxy Music since 1972, Mat is delighted to interview Phil Manzanera from p30.

David Fricke

David has been writing about Pearl Jam since his original Rolling Stone review of their debut album in 1991: "On *Ten*, Pearl Jam hurtles into the mystic at warp speed." He is back on the case in this issue, interviewing the band for their first MOJO cover story, from p68.

Danny Clinch

The garlanded US rock snapper has shot Dylan, Springsteen and, not for the first time, this month's MOJO cover stars Pearl Jam. "It's such a blessing," he says, "to collaborate with a band whose music you love, and who have such a creative point of view about where they're heading."

Kevin Westenberg, Danny Clinch, Chris Nurse, Nic Chapman, BBC/Banijay Rights, Kudos

JULIA HOLTER

SOMETHING IN THE ROOM SHE MOVES

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PEARL JAM

LIVE RARITIES

1 THUMBING MY WAY
Vancouver, BC. 30/05/03

If Pearl Jam are often associated with those "loud guitar riffs", here's immediate evidence of their gentler virtues: a folk-ish standout from 2002's *Riot Act* that presents them as spiritual heirs to R.E.M. A surprise, perhaps, that live performances of it have been so scarce since the 2003 *Riot Act* tour.

Written by Vedder. Published by Innocent Bystander. (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2003 Pearl Jam. From *2003.05.30 – Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada) (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404405

2 DOWN
Phoenix, AZ. 19/11/13

Another one from the *Riot Act* sessions, though the studio version of Down only surfaced on the B-side of the I Am Mine single. This live take from 2013 is a little faster and tougher than the original's jangle.

Written by Vedder, McCready, Gossard. Published by / Innocent Bystander (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR) / Write Treatage Music (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR) / Jumpin' Cat Music (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2013 Pearl Jam. From *2013.11.19 – Phoenix, Arizona (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404406

3 SAD
Chicago, IL. 02/08/07

Lost Dogs, 2003's collection of offcuts and rarities, reveals that the sessions for 2000's *Binaural* album were an unexpectedly productive time for Pearl Jam – a case in point being this Paint It Black-ish banger, Sad. The 2007 Chicago show it's taken from didn't emerge as part of the rapid release *Bootleg Series*, dropping instead as the second archival *Vault* album in 2012.

Written by Eddie Vedder. ℗2007 Monkeywrench, Inc. © 2003 Innocent Bystander (GMR). From *Vic Theater, Chicago, IL – August 2, 2007 (Live)*

4 LEATHERMAN
Manchester, UK. 04/06/00

Leatherman dates from 1997 and first appeared as the flipside of Pearl Jam's Given To Fly single. This stream-of-consciousness, helter-skelter version is the earliest recording on *Live Rarities*, from one of the 2000 European tour shows that comprised the first 25 volumes of the *Official Bootlegs* series.

Written by Vedder. Published by Innocent Bystander (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2000 Pearl Jam. From *2000.06.04 – Manchester, England (United Kingdom) [Live]* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404408

9 DRIFTING
Oklahoma City, OK. 03/04/03

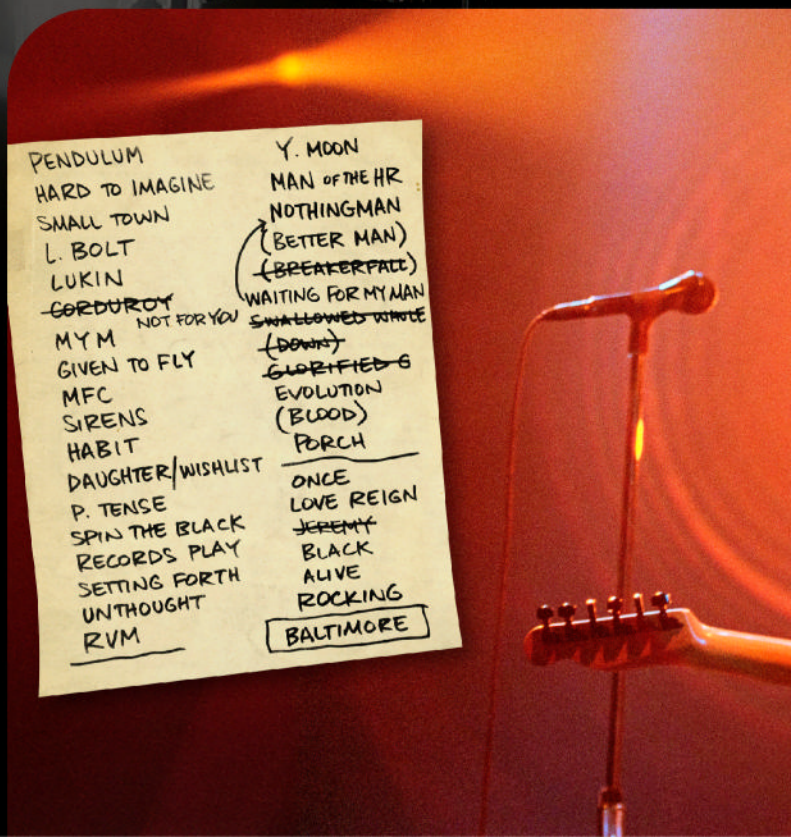
The rarest of our *Live Rarities*, the country-folk saunter of Drifting first showed up as a 1999 Christmas single for Pearl Jam fanclub members. Pearljam.com calculates that the band have only attempted it five times live. One for Dylan and Springsteen fans – that's Eddie Vedder on resonantly wailing harmonica.

Written by Vedder. Published by Innocent Bystander (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2003 Pearl Jam. From *2003.04.03 – North America 2003 (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404413

10 PARTING WAYS
Oklahoma City, OK. 16/11/13

A serendipitous closer, in the shape of the final listed song on 2000's *Binaural*. Again, there's an echo of R.E.M.'s raga-rock to Parting Ways; a *Reckoning* track like 7 Chinese Bros or Camera, perhaps. And has any band since the Grateful Dead understood the potency of live recordings so well?

Written by Vedder. Published by Innocent Bystander (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2013 Pearl Jam. From *2013.11.16 – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404414



Rob Watkins/Alamy

THERE'S A GOOD MOMENT IN THIS MONTH'S MOJO COVER story where Matt Cameron, Pearl Jam's drummer, is talking about the swift genesis of their new album, *Dark Matter*. "Bands from our generation – we've played gigs forever," Cameron says. "We can set up anywhere and get right into a performance… We've been doing it for decades."

It's a simple truth which at the same time underplays the range and nuance Pearl Jam have embraced over the last 34 years – something made explicit by their vast *Official Bootlegs* series. A catalogue of live albums now numbering over 500, Pearl Jam have released nearly every gig they've played since 2000. Through them, you can trace how setlists and songs evolve from night to night; how one of the richest repertoires in contemporary rock keeps on renewing itself.

Haven't managed to collect all those 500-plus volumes? *Live Rarities*, compiled by Pearl Jam especially for MOJO, should be the perfect place to start. The 10 deep cuts assembled here date from 2000 to 2018, but haven't been performed that often over the years… "Loud guitar riffs, loud drumming, melodic hard rock," as Cameron explains, in all its infinite complexity.

5 HARD TO IMAGINE
Baltimore, MD. 27/10/13

"A frequently held sign by fans over the years," says Mike McCready in the sleevenotes to *Lost Dogs*, signalling how this soul-scouring 1993 *Vs* outtake has long been a nugget beloved of the Pearl Jam faithful. This brooding version dates from 2013.

Written by Vedder, Gossard. Published by Innocent Bystander (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR) / Write Treatage Music (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2013 Pearl Jam. From *2013.10.27 – Baltimore, Maryland (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404409

6 GHOST
Jacksonville, FL. 13/04/16

A taut garage rocker from *Riot Act*, Ghost has rarely been exhumed since the dates following the album release in 2002 and 2003. Mystifyingly neglected, this Jacksonville manifestation is the only one from 2016; the song has been played once in the subsequent eight years, in Barcelona in 2018.

Written by Eddie Vedder and Jeff Ament. ℗2016 Monkeywrench, Inc. © 2003 Innocent Bystander and Scribing C-Ment Songs (GMR). From *Jacksonville, FL – April 13, 2016 (Live)*

7 NO WAY
Los Angeles, CA. 24/11/13

Stone Gossard's song from *Yield*, the fifth Pearl Jam album, is another one whose rarity is presumably down to the band's surfeit of fine songs rather than to any inherent weakness. Pearljam.com reveals that the simmering chug of No Way has been played live a grand total of 12 times between 1998 and 2014.

Written by Gossard. Published by Write Treatage Music (GMR) administered by Universal Music Works (GMR). ℗&©2013 Pearl Jam. From *2013.11.24 – Los Angeles, California (Live)* (Monkeywrench Records) - ISRC USA322404411

8 FATAL
Missoula, MT. 13/08/18

A second Gossard song in a row, Fatal is – like Sad – one of those terrific *Binaural* outtakes that eventually surfaced on *Lost Dogs*. Eddie Vedder's sleevenotes to the latter note that "The original chorus said 'The answers in Plato'… [But we] just couldn't get around it sounding like 'Play-doh'." Fortunately, the rewritten "The answers are fatal" only intensifies the song's power.

Written by Stone Gossard. ℗2013 Monkeywrench, Inc. © 2000 Write Treatage Music (GMR). From *Missoula, MT – August 13, 2013 (Live)*

Alive and kicking: Eddie Vedder on the *Binaural* Tour, Cardiff International Arena, Wales, June 6, 2000. This was one of the live concert bootlegs released by the band as *6/6/00, Cardiff, Wales* in the collection of '18 Ape/Man' compilations; (left) Vedder's handwritten setlist from the Baltimore Arena gig, October 27, 2013 (see Track 5).

"THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW SPEED BUMPS IN THE ROAD. BUT WE GOT THROUGH."

PEARL JAM. THE INTERVIEW.

PAGE 68.

AOIFE O'DONOVAN
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ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO
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"The Oregon band is shaping a new Pacific Northwest rock scene with hippie anthems for troubled times"
—Rolling Stone

OUT 17 MAY

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AVALANCHE

"intoxicating melodic line and imagistic lyrics"... "Equal parts lovestruck and skeptical"
—FLOOD Magazine

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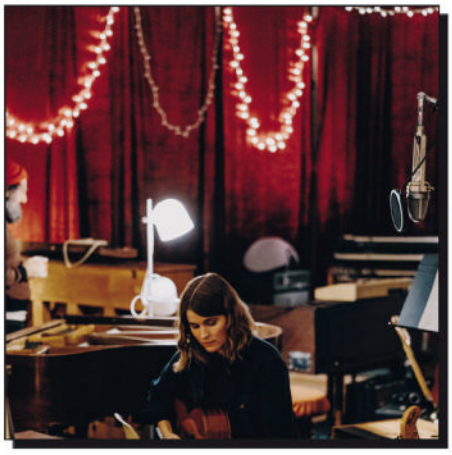


Yep Roc Records

Anoushka Shankar

SITAR SCION

What music are you currently grooving to?

Hide & Seek by **Stormzy**, a lot – a perfect vibe. I've also been rediscovering **Tracy Chapman** and appreciating what a master songwriter she is. Also Midnight Sun by **Isaac Delusion** sits in that nice, mellow, groovy space.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

If I have to, like, die only listening to one album for the rest of my life, it would be *Passages* by my dad [**Ravi**] and **Philip Glass**, this duet album they did in 1990. Each piece has like a kernel of one of them, it's just a weird kind of magic.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I was visiting my auntie in Montreal and I went to my very first shopping mall and bought a cassette of *Kylie* by **Kylie Minogue**.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Someone I'd kill to work with is **Björk**. She's got such a fearlessness and inventiveness, it would be incredible to be her.

What do you sing in the shower?

I try to remember old Bollywood songs I grew up listening to – recently In Ankhon Ki Masti by **Asha Bhosle**. They're impossible to sing because it takes such a high skill level, so I always end up laughing.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I'm listening to a lot of **Sault** again, I still love their *5*. Otherwise, I might get nostalgic and listen to some **Chemical Brothers** – Hey Boy Hey Girl.

And your Sunday morning record?

If I'm in a Western music mood, it might be **Ólafur Arnald & Nils Frahm**'s *Trance Frendz*. On the Indian side, some gorgeous improvised classical music. Also, I'm in love with Chan Kithan by **Ali Sethi** right now.

Anoushka Shankar's Chapter II: How Dark It Is Before Dawn is out April 5 on LEITER.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Karl Bartos

KRAFTWERKER, AND MORE!

What music are you currently grooving to?

Since we have a few gigs coming up, I'm rehearsing and there isn't much time for other music. Whenever I can, I sit at the piano or grab my acoustic guitar and play whatever is floating around in my head. Recently it was Yesterday Once More by the **Carpenters**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

The Beatles – *Revolver.*

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I spent Christmas/New Year 1965 with my family in Berchtesgaden, Bavaria. There was a small record shop in the village and in the window I discovered Get Off Of My Cloud by **The Rolling Stones**. I had no idea what it sounded like, but I'd heard Satisfaction and bought the new single with my pocket money. This just had to be done!

Laura Lewis, Philipp Rathmer, Tina Korhonen

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I don't want to be a different musician, but I would want to have some of **Orpheus**'s abilities. With his music he could move people, animals and even stones. His harp playing and singing even convinced the ruler of the underworld to give him back his wife.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't. It would probably be complete nonsense.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I'm not a heavy music consumer at home. If I want to consciously listen, then I need an occasion, a concert. In contrast, making music is like breathing for me. What I enjoy most is composing: observing the world, trying things out.

And your Sunday morning record?

It depends. The Christmas Oratorio, or at Easter the St Matthew Passion by **Bach**, or during the year other classical music. Sometimes I hear this immortal music from the next room while I prepare breakfast, and that reminds me of a different world, and I'm not afraid of anything any more.

Karl Bartos's The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari is out now on Bureau B.

Francis Rossi

QUO MASTER GENERAL

What music are you currently grooving to?

Something I've just recorded – or whatever is on Radio 2 at the moment.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

The Everly Brothers' *Greatest Hits*. I grew up listening to them, it's what started me in the business. Those amazing sibling harmonies, and great songs that still all work today.

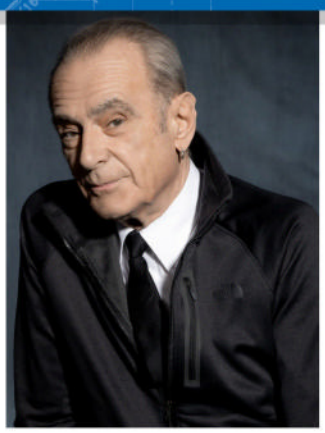
What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Walk Don't Run by **The John Barry Seven**. Can't remember where I bought it, it was a while ago now!

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Probably **Jeff Lynne**. I knew him quite well when I was younger. I don't have heroes but nearly everything he does has been amazing, and he took musical risks that would have frightened the rest of us. Suddenly he came back into favour a few years ago and everyone loves him: I had been on my own there for a while!

> **"I'd blocked out Vera Lynn as 'Voice of the Forces', but she's amazing."**
> **FRANCIS ROSSI**



What do you sing in the shower?

Whatever comes to mind. It's different every morning to be honest.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I wouldn't necessarily have one, but as you're asking it would probably be When Will I Be Loved by The Everly Brothers.

And your Sunday morning record?

Some fantastic Italian opera. The real buffs often sniff at the Italian opera, but they do at Quo too, so I don't care. And I could have gone for **Randy Crawford** or **Hall & Oates** or **AC/DC** or **Muse**, but I thought, "Sod it, I'll choose Home Sweet Home or Yours by **Vera Lynn**." In lockdown, I was watching a movie and heard that fantastic voice. I had blocked her out as 'Voice of the Forces' and all that bollocks, but she's amazing.

Status Quo's 5-CD set The Early Years (1966-69) is out now. UK live dates in summer 2024.

MOJO

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I READ AN INTERESTING BOOK RECENTLY,

Live Dead by John Brackett, with quite an intimidating subtitle: The Grateful Dead, Live Recordings And The Ideology Of Liveness. Brackett's argument is that the Dead's early concert albums (like *Live Dead* itself) weren't purely live, as they were augmented by studio overdubs, and with crowd noise mixed down. What Deadheads increasingly prized over the years were not necessarily *better*, but indisputably more *real*, warts'n'all recordings of entire live shows. Consequently, the racks of Dead bootleg tapes on the shelves were soon joined by hundreds of official live CDs, that made capital out of reproducing raw experience.

This month, MOJO is proud to finally award Pearl Jam the front cover they've long deserved. We're also thrilled to include with our magazine a CD of live Pearl Jam tracks culled from their catalogue of over 500 live albums. Like the Grateful Dead, these rich and varied live sets showcase a band committed to unmediated connections with their fans. Pearl Jam are one of those rare, stadium-sized bands whose popularity has never compromised their authenticity – and how they've managed to sustain that for three and a half decades is at the heart of David Fricke's exceptional cover story. When he first heard *Quadrophenia*, Eddie Vedder tells Fricke, "I felt more understood by that record than by teachers, family or peers." Maybe that's how you felt when you first heard *Ten*, too?

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

Being alone, there's a certain dignity to it

Big shout out, if I may, for the fitting tribute by Andrew Perry in honour of the late, great Kevin 'Geordie' Walker of Killing Joke (and side-projects Murder Inc, The Damage Manual, K÷93) [MOJO 364]. His sudden passing has hit me and no doubt many others who avidly followed the band for well over four decades. He was an enigma insofar as he always gave the impression of looking uninterested on-stage while he produced a wall of sound which few, if anyone, in the music world could recreate. The last time most of us saw him play was at the Royal Albert Hall in London last year, a gathering of 5,000 or so diehards desperate to hear those first two albums live once more – little did any of us know it would be the last time the original line-up would appear on-stage.

The nearest I got to meeting him was at Manchester Albert Hall the year before, as he played Change during a soundcheck. Tantalisingly, we spotted him outside the Royal Albert Hall three hours before the final show. He realised he'd been clocked and, quick as a flash, he was gone, back through the stage side door he had come from for a crafty cig… That summed Geordie up to a tee, he didn't really do the social bit with strangers, he preferred to let his trusty Gibson ES 295 do the talking. Rest in peace indeed, Geordie, your legacy will live on as one of the original pioneers of the post-punk era.

Sean Riley, via e-mail

Where are the anthems for our youth? What happened to music that meant something?

I very much enjoyed your How To Buy feature on Merle Haggard [MOJO 364] – I doubt there's a country singer alive or dead with Merle's level of consistency over six decades and countless recordings. I would like to draw your readers' attention to a wonderful album that came out on CD in 1994, namely *Tulare Dust – A Songwriters' Tribute To Merle Haggard*. This fantastic 15-track album was the brainchild of Tom Russell

and Dave Alvin, who both contribute great versions of Tulare Dust and Kern River respectively. There isn't a dud or below-par track amongst the entire 15 songs, featuring such luminaries and cult figures as Iris Dement, Peter Case, Rosie Flores, Billy Joe Shaver etc. If anyone's in any doubt then one listen to Steve Young's heart-rending take on Shopping For Dresses, or Katy Moffatt's I Can't Be Myself, should convince them!

John S. Thomson, Balbeggie

A compliment for us is a compliment for you

On your All Back To My Place page you ask the guests "What is your favourite Saturday night record?" Well, you've just provided them all with the answer in the form of your *Jet Powered Pop!* CD [MOJO 364]. What a fabulous concoction of grown-up pop music – it's on constant repeat in my car. Some great stuff new to me, some I know well such as one of my favourites, Gigolo Aunts. If you had been able to squeeze in some Buffalo Tom I'd have been delirious.

Robbie Stubbs, Plymouth

…I was beyond pleased to see that your monthly CDs have returned with issues of MOJO in the US. They are always meticulously curated and have exposed me to so many great artists over the years. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I adore your magazine and I am so glad the publication is whole again. Keep up the great work!

Lars Nelson, Minneapolis

You rock my world

Thank you for yet another wondrous issue and the fine examination of Macca's *Band On The Run* [MOJO 364]. My only tiny gripe is with the photo caption on page 75: the promotional photo featuring a sea lion and other very literal interpretations of the lyrics of Junior's Farm features not Joe English but short-lived drummer Geoff Britton – he of the amusing karate moves (check out the One Hand Clapping film). I once had a poster of an alternate shot from the same photo session obtained from the Wings Fun Club in 1974 – maybe I still have it somewhere…

Chris Knight, via e-mail

This negativity just makes me stronger

Three matters arising from my initial browse through MOJO 365. First: how you can compile a list of the Top 30 Steely Dan songs and not include the title track of *Pretzel Logic* is beyond me. Second: how come none of the Melanie obituaries I've read – including yours – mention her fabulous rendition of the Stones' Ruby Tuesday (UK Number 9, 1970)? Third (and I think this may have provoked comment before): what is the point of having a five-star rating system for album reviews which hardly ever include the top or bottom ratings?

In issue 365, there were no five-star albums: fair enough – great albums obviously don't come round very often. However, less credibly, there were also no one or two-star reviews. Of the remaining 89 albums, 16 were deemed to be three stars, and 73 were garlanded with four stars. This seems to be about par for the course with your reviews. Frankly, it's hard to believe there is so much above-average music around these days. I'd like to know how you plead because there seems little point in having such a system if you're only really using half of it.

Ian Roberts, Leicester

The clue's in the name, really: The MOJO Filter basically filters out the bad stuff. We're sent hundreds more albums each month than we have room to review, and it seems churlish to include records our writers are less enthusiastic about, at the expense of highlighting music they love. – *JM*

How does stuff get so complicated?

In your great 30 Greatest Steely Dan Songs [MOJO 365] there's a bit of a howler at Number 19, Black Cow. The writer goes on at length about the prowess of legendary drummer Bernard Purdie. Which is all true, but unfortunately not for this song. It was LA session ace Paul Humphrey who laid down the immaculate groove. No surprise from a guy who drummed for Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* album, Frank Zappa, and for a number of years, Lawrence Well's TV band. Great article, though.

John Ned, via e-mail

…Your 30 Greatest Steely Dan Songs appeared to be serving those who consume music through a digital playlist! Please spare a thought for those of your readers who still consume music through the format of the album. Steely Dan were always an album-oriented band and ranking their Top 30 songs, as you reference in your introduction, seems an unsophisticated way of appraising their work! Your article on Michael Head with selective album reviews of the highlights from his back catalogue was much more incisive and a catalyst for me to listen to the albums again.

Philip Ferry, Leicester

So, good night. And goodbye. And call me back.

The quotes on MOJO 365's letter pages are all taken from Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery – starring, among others, the fantastic Janelle Monáe, and Kate Hudson, ex-wife of Chris Robinson whose latest album with The Black Crowes is reviewed in the issue. Anyway, the best link I can suggest is from the Beatles song of the same name, one of John's self-referential best and an eternal influence on cover stars Gallagher and Squire. What's more, their song Mars To Liverpool features the lyrics "the sun is out, the sky is blue", which are a direct lift from Dear Prudence, the song that precedes Glass Onion on *The White Album*.

Jamie Taylor, Cardiff

Nice thinking, but watch Glass Onion again – it's packed with sly Steely Dan references, starting with a big Dan poster in Derol's room. – *JM*

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO

A Teenage Symphony To Hank?

Brian Wilson returns to his lost 1970 country album. Collaborator Fred Vail explains all.

WHEN BRIAN WILSON called Beach Boys manager Fred Vail in early 1970, Vail figured it was to discuss business. Sometimes called 'The Sixth Beach Boy', he'd worked with them since 1963, and was a fly on the wall for such memorable moments as the writing of The Warmth Of The Sun and the first playback of *Pet Sounds*.

"Brian said, 'I want to do a country album, and I want you to be the vocalist,'" recalls Vail, who had no recording experience but adds, "I'm no Carl Wilson, but I can carry a tune."

As they talked, Vail realised that Wilson didn't have a plan. "I asked, Did you write any songs? 'No.' Do you have a band? 'No.' He said, 'You pick the songs, you get the musicians, and we'll go into Wally Heider's studio.'"

Vail reached back to his days as a country DJ, selecting favourites by Hank Williams and Elvis, plus contemporary tunes by James Taylor and Bacharach & David. For musicians, he called "players who knew country music," such as James Burton and Glen D Hardin.

Basic tracks and scratch vocals were cut for 14 songs, with Wilson guiding the proceedings. "The sound was traditional country, with a pop edge," Vail says. "Remember the time – LA in 1970 was going through a country rock era. Linda Ronstadt, The Ozark Mountain Daredevils. We were channelling some of that."

But two weeks in, Wilson lost interest. "It was unknown territory for him," says Vail. This was also Brian Wilson's bed-and-bathrobe period of weight gain, drugs, seclusion. In 1971, he'd abandon another extracurricular production, for American Spring, his wife Marilyn's duo with her sister. Vail says, "I figured, Maybe we'll get back to recording when he's in the mood. That never happened."

"Will this be the country *SMiLE*?"

In the years after, the project took on the name *Cows In The Pasture*. Vail moved on to various music biz gigs, and later opened Treasure Isle Studio in Nashville. In 2014, a call came from The Beach Boys' management. While clearing the vaults, they'd found five boxes of tape from the sessions with Wilson. Vail said, "Don't throw them out, send them to me!"

Without funds to finish them, he let the tapes sit. More years passed. Enter promoter and Beach Boys fanatic Sam Parker, who encouraged Vail to revisit the songs. Featuring producer T Bone Burnett and special guests – "rock'n'roll legends and contemporary country stars," teases Parker – *Cows* is slated for 2025, paired with a making-of docu-series. With no advance music, we can only wonder: will this be the country *SMiLE*, or another *Stars And Stripes* (1996's best-forgotten Beach Boys country mash-up)?

"There wasn't anything overtly Brian in the original tracks, but there will be in the overdubs – there's even going to be a Van Dyke Parks/Brian Wilson instrumental added in," says Vail, who's been assured that Brian "is really into finishing it."

In January, Brian lost his wife Melinda, and soon after it was reported that he has dementia; his family are to appoint conservators to supervise his affairs.

"We know about the dementia story and the conservatorship, and unfortunately, he just lost Melinda," says Vail. "But his manager Jean Sievers is very involved – and executive producer of the documentary – and she's assured us that Brian's going to continue with the project."

Bill DeMain

Good vibrations: Brian Wilson in god's country, 1970; (top) former Beach Boys manager and *Cows In The Pasture* project director Fred Vail (second right) with the band, Sacramento, California, December 22, 1963; (above) the Wally Heider Studios recording notes from April 17, 1970; (left) Vail now with producer Sam Parker.

Ed Thrasher/Mptvimages/Eyevine, Jason Denton, Mike Davidson/Fred Vail

Good Humor

Trippin' on RSD: a selection of vinyl specials available on April 20.

RECORD STORE DAY IS HERE – YOU NEED MORE VINYL – EVERYONE'S HAPPY!

FOR 2013's Record Store Day, there was speculation that **Kate Bush** would release her cancelled 1993 single Eat The Music. This year it's finally happening, on a 10-inch picture disc (see above, bottom left). More miraculous, Bush has been announced as 2024's Record Store Day (April 20) ambassador for the nation's independent vinyl outlets. "I hope," she said, "you get to celebrate music that's been specially released for you."

This year, it's easy to think it has. Who wouldn't want a copy of **David Bowie**'s *Waiting In The Sky (Before The Starman Came To Earth)* (Parlophone)? Taken from Trident Studios 1/4-inch stereo tapes from December 15, 1971, it makes for an alt-tracklist, parallel universe version of *Ziggy Stardust*. Also reverse-engineering a classic, *The 1975 Sire Demos* (Rhino/Warner) by the **Ramones** collects early sketches for the first time on 'Ultra Clear With Black Splatter' vinyl. The rewiring continues: 50 years from its original release, **Gene Clark**'s *No Other Sessions* (4AD) presents the original tracklist in nine alternate versions and nine first full takes.

Augmenting old favourites with bonus tracks is, as ever, popular: LPs promoted to doubles with contemporary out-takes and rarities include **Elton John**'s *Caribou* (UMR, on 'Sky Blue' vinyl), **Parliament**'s debut *Osmium* Deluxe Edition (Demon, on green vinyl), and **Captain Beefheart**'s *The Spotlight Kid* (Rhino, on 'Milky Clear' vinyl), whose second disc of alternate takes includes the unreleased, nine-minute version of I'm Gonna Booglarize You Baby.

Elsewhere, there are newly minted records which will slot nicely into any collection: **Faces**' *The Complete BBC Sessions* (Rhino) compiles the beloved entertainers' rare recordings for the national broadcaster in hi-fi on clear wax. **Yardbirds**' *Psycho Daisies – The Complete B-Sides* (Demon) curates the blues rockers' flipsides on purple vinyl with orange splatters (there's also a translucent red repress of the Yardbirds' *Five Live* (L.M.L.R.)). **The Fall**'s *Country On The Click (Alternative Version)* (Cherry Red) brings the original mix of MES's 2003 triumph to vinyl for the first time, on translucent orange wax, using original unused sleeve art. Does **Ian Hunter**'s brand-new *Defiance Part 2: Fiction* (Sun), out on April 20, fit the brief because its RSD LP incarnation includes three tracks unavailable elsewhere?

Eye-catching visual novelty is everywhere, with bold new colour schemes for LPs including **Black Sabbath**'s *Paranoid* (Sanctuary, 'Red and Black Splatter'), **The Who**'s *The Story Of The Who* (Polydor, pink and green), **The Roches**' wondrous self-titled debut (Real Gone, 'Ruby Red'), **Little Richard**'s *Right Now!* (Omnivore, 'Sunflare'), and, 60 years on, **The Rolling Stones**' first LP (UMR, 'Blue/ Black Swirl). And who could resist **Queen**'s Cool Cat on pink 7-inch (EMI) or **John Lennon**'s Mind Games on luminous glow- in-the-dark 12-inch (UME)?

LP picture discs, meanwhile, include **Fleetwood Mac**'s *Rumours* (Rhino/Warner), **The Cure**'s *The Top* (UMR) and, from **X Ray Spex**, *Germ Free Adolescents* (Secret) and *Conscious Consumer* (Do Yourself In). **Marc Bolan & T. Rex**'s *Zinc Alloy* (Demon) arrives on a 50th Anniversary Zoetrope Picture Disc edition: other Zoetrope presentations – when the spinning record produces a dynamic optical illusion when lit with a strobe – include **Blur**'s *Parklife* (Parlophone) and *Electronic Sound* and *Wonderwall Music* by **George Harrison** (Dark Horse).

There's loads more, of course. This year's gig recordings include **The Doors**' triple-LP *Live At Konserthuset, Stockholm, September 20, 1968* (Rhino, blue vinyl), **De La Soul** *Live At Tramps, NYC, 1996* (Chrysalis), and, formerly a radio-only promo double LP, **Talking Heads**' *Live On Tour* (Rhino/Warner). In the jazz corner, try **Sun Ra**'s *At The Showcase – Live In Chicago* (Jazz Detective/Elemental) and *Inside The Light World: Sun Ra Meets The OVC* (Strut): reggae-wise, there's **Dub Syndicate**'s *Mellow & Colly* (Echo Beach), **Lee 'Scratch' Perry**'s rare dub set *Skanking With The Upsetter* (Trojan, on yellow vinyl) and **Prince Far I**'s *Cry Tuff Chants On U* (On-U Sound).

Or you could bag four coloured **Ennio Morricone** OSTs (BTF Italy), a heart-shaped disc of **Pete Wylie & The Mighty Wah!**'s Heart As Big As Liverpool (Chrysalis) or the three-LP *The Legendary Recordings, 1975-1985* by **94 East Featuring Prince** (Charly). Or how about a two-disc half-speed master of **Scott Walker**'s *Tilt* (UMR), a 50th anniversary edition of **Harmonia**'s *Musik von Harmonia* (Groenland) or a repress of **The Chills**' The Lost EP (Fire)? Let the vinyl gods decide!

Ian Harrison

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"Who could resist Lennon's Mind Games on luminous glow-in-the-dark 12-inch?"

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Around the horn: Mercury Rev in their Catskills studio (from left) Jonathan Donahue, Marion Genser and Grasshopper.

FACT SHEET
Title: TBC
Due: late summer
Production: Mercury Rev
Songs: Mood Swings/Born Horses/Your Hammer, My Heart/Ancient Love/Everything I Thought I Had Lost
The Buzz: "It has this astral, smudged, dream-like quality, and maybe some of [trumpeter; composer] Jon Hassell's other-worldly fuzziness."
Jonathan Donahue

MERCURY REV DEFY THE ALGORITHM WITH LP 10

"EACH VOCAL was recorded as a recitation standing on the banks of the Hudson River," says Jonathan Donahue of Mercury Rev's latest. "That's why you can hear steamboats going by and dogs barking." Back on radar after their 2019 re-imagining of Bobbie Gentry's *The Delta Sweete* and their cosmic-psych side-project Harmony Rockets' 2018 instrumental set *Lachesis/Clotho/Atropos*, the Rev go spoken-word on their new LP. "We are again out of step with a pop-orientated world, and that can lead to some sleepless nights," notes Donahue. "We're just being ourselves, but you worry you'll get buried under the TikTok and Spotify avalanche."

Largely recorded over the last year at the band's Catskills studio, the record was mixed by Peter Katis (The National; Interpol). Working amid such treasured totems as the piano Rev guitarist Grasshopper acquired from Donahue's elementary school and the painting which adorned the cover of 2001's *All Is Dream*, they didn't rush. "People want to hear you did it in two weeks and it came magically out of the clouds," says Donahue. "Maybe we are archaic in this idea, but time is a fully-fledged member of this band. Some of these recordings took a while to reveal themselves, almost like a desert wind blowing sand off an old stone formation."

Father Time aside, other players include Mercury Rev's new, Austrian-born keyboardist Marion Genser, who brings some of Vangelis's "faded Polaroid ambience", and Jesse Chandler on "heavily reverbed, almost abstract" piano and saxophone. Martin Keith's upright bass and Chandler and Grasshopper's sometimes real, sometimes synthesized horns bring a dead of night, psych-jazz element, while Jeff Lipstein, introduced to the Rev by New York Dolls' David Johansen, plays drums.

Grasshopper says creating music around Donahue's pre-recorded prose poems was like "a Brecht or Weill thing, the words suggesting visuals, and the visuals suggesting moods." Thematically, meanwhile, the record sees Donahue tap the sometimes revelatory well of deep self-reflection. "It's not my diary of the pandemic and it's not a list of complaints," he says. "It's the splashes and ripples that unnerve you before your inner pond finally returns to stillness.

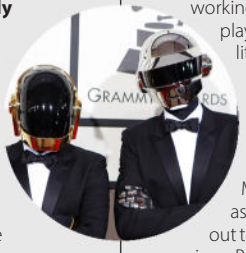
"Ghosts from our musical past seem ever-present," concludes the Rev's frontman. "At times it feels like Hamlet or Macbeth. There's a sense of doubt creeping in. Is Mercury Rev this? Is it that? The song Born Horses is based on fragments of a dream I had, and it's a wink back to me and Grasshopper feeling different to most people for many decades now.

"At times it feels very lonely doing what we do, but at other times it feels like the best gift possible."

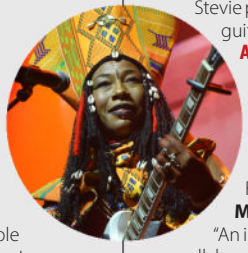
James McNair

> **"Time is a fully-fledged member of this band."**
> **JONATHAN DONAHUE**

ALSO WORKING



…producer/writer **Freddy Wexler** told ABC Audio about recording with **BILLY JOEL**, who recently released his first new song in 17 years. "We have talked about it," he said. "[Billy's] not looking to chase hits and neither am I. If it can stay fun, then the possibilities are endless" …drummer **Quinn Smith** told the alt.news site that **DAFT PUNK** (below), who allegedly split in 2021, are working on a fifth LP, which he played on in 2018. "We were literally just trying to get vibes across," he said, "[there were] a lot of spontaneous things" …**JACK WHITE** posted a message from his Third Man Studio last month, asking, "studio engineers out there, have you ever tried using a Beats pill speaker as a microphone?" …**PAUL WELLER**'s new LP *66* arrives in May. **Suggs**, **Richard Hawley**, **Noel Gallagher**, **Bobby Gillespie** and **Dr Robert** guest: songs include Flying Fish Jumble, My Best Friend's Coat and A Glimpse Of You …rumours that he's playing Glastonbury this year prompted speculation that **STEVIE WONDER** might return to the multiple LPs he's mentioned in recent years. The last piece of music he made public was The Universe Is Watching Us – Our Unimaginable Fate, where Stevie played the keyboard/guitar hybrid, the harpejji…



ARAB STRAP's *I'm totally fine with it 👍 don't give a fuck anymore 👍* is out in May …**FATOUMATA DIAWARA** (left) has been in the studio with French singer-songwriter **Matthieu Chedid**. "An incredible project, in collaboration with my brother… is being carried out," she wrote…

Getty (2)

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THE REDS, PINKS AND PURPLES
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TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

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MICHEL MOERS
As Is
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CHAOS
TRAPPED ANIMAL LP / CD

An exploration of heavy guitars and beautiful harmonies. Featuring such hits as 'Vibrator'. 'My Labia is Lopsided, But I Don't Mind' and 'Mild Misogynist', Chaos is here to level the field.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
UNDER THE BRIDGE 2
SKEP WAX RECORDS LP / CD

A second compilation of new music by songwriters and bands who once recorded for Sarah Records. Still idealistic, still pure, still in love with independent pop music.

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COMPARE WHAT'S THERE
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HOUSE OF ALL
CONTINUUM
TINY GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS LP / CD

HOUSE OF ALL's surprise debut took the underground by storm. Now Bramah, Greenway, Hanley, Hanley & Wolstencroft back with a follow-up that expands their scope, vision and energy.

PLAYHOUSE
DYNAMO
GOD UNKNOWN RECORDS LP

Liverpool's long lost 90's Indie Rock noisemakers. Compiling 3 singles and unreleased tracks. "If these guys were American they'd have a massive following" Stevie Chick. Includes a cover of Sebadoh's "It's So Hard To Fall In Love"

DRIFT
11 POINTS IN TIME
GOD UNKNOWN RECORDS LP

Index For Working Musik's Nathalia Bruno delivers her 2nd album recalling this likes of Chris & Cosey / early Cabaret Voltaire. Lyrically it is a noirish unpacking of a decades-old disappearance of Rosa Crucci.

THEE SINSEERS
SINSEERLY YOURS
COLEMINE RECORDS LP / CD

Sinseerly, Soulfully, Sweet. Quinones and his crew have created a distinctive vibe that explores all aspects of a timeless genre, bringing together their interpretation of music through an unmistakable modern lens.

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ROSALI
BITE DOWN
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

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MALEGRÍA
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CHASTITY BELT
LIVE LAUGH LOVE
SUICIDE SQUEEZE LP / CD

Live Laugh Love finds Chastity Belt in their prime as musicians. It's never been more apparent that they are creative siblings, cut from the same belt.

SHOVEL DANCE COLLECTIVE
THE WATER IS THE SHOVEL OF THE SHORE
MEMORIALS OF DISTINCTION / DOUBLE DARE 2LP

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Love resurrection: Richard Hawley looks to the stars.

Richard Hawley

Sheffield's Sinatra talks a new album, time travel, and guitars beyond value.

"MY DAD used to say, 'Son – stay on the surfboard.'" Ever philosophical, north country guitar man Richard Hawley has ridden his wave as a solo artist since 2001, using his smoky croon, melodic potency and steady hand to express the beyondness of the everyday, with full fealty to the romance and roots of rock'n'roll.

New album *In This City They Call You Love* continues this tradition, with its sweet but sturdy songs of love, dreams and hope. Additionally, his Sheffield-set musical drama Standing At The Sky's Edge has now opened in the West End. "Great music never disappoints," he says. "It's like the tablets from the fucking mountain. It's the thing I believe in passionately and truly…"

Dean Chalkley

BLAZE OF HAWLEY

Richard's piping-hot five.

1 **Fats Domino**
My Heart Is Bleeding (IMPERIAL, 1962)

2 **Jim Burgett**
Scene Of The Crime (ORO, C.1963)

3 **The Fleetwoods**
Goodnight My Love (DOLTON, 1963)

4 **Nolan Strong & The Diablos**
The Wind (FORTUNE, 1954)

5 **The Trade Winds**
New York's A Lonely Town (RED BIRD, 1965)

Hello, Richard. What are you doing?

I'm trying to learn to sing Fats Domino's Walking To New Orleans, with conviction, just for my own pleasure. Fats, the way he sings – fuck! Literally reduces me to nothing, like I'm some kind of vapour or something, not even that. It's good to have these compass points to aim for as a human being. Fats, and Santo & Johnny, those two are just pivotal to the fulcrum in my head, and Little Walter, John Lee Hooker, Elmore James, Muddy Waters… music resets, it's like a phone when it's fucked. You just turn it off and turn it back on again, heheh, and everything is all right! So be the fulcrum, ignore the seesaw, because it's going to happen anyway.

> **"Be the fulcrum, ignore the seesaw."**
> **RICHARD HAWLEY**

Why's the new album called *In This City They Call You Love*?

In Sheffield, which is my muse and will always be, people do call you 'love'. Every single day of my life I hear the word 'love', ha ha! It's the language that we use, very much a 'here' thing. Then you read the news, which is enormously depressing, and you just seem to see the word 'hate'. So it's that, and voices singing together. Something positive, and I don't mean this in a soft arse way. This concept of unity seems to be something that's kind of missing out of the world. So some sort of healing, I think was going off. From what? Probably the last few years, we've all been battered and bruised, but it's not a lockdown album.

How does it feel to have a play running in the West End?

We thought at best we'd get a week at the Crucible in Sheffield, now it's opened in the West End, fucking bonkers! It's not a happy ride for people, y'know, there's no jazz hands, no tapdancing routines and all that shit, it's dark as fuck. But at the end, there is hope. And there's no political or moral finger-wagging, there's nobody on a soapbox. All it is, is telling the story as it happened, truthfully, with a good heart. The play, the musical, whatever you want to call it, I couldn't do something like that with any authority unless I was so rooted.

What else do you know to be true?

Well, here's today's news. You can be a time traveller with music. You don't need Doctor Who. You just need to listen and close – or open – your eyes and dance around, or do whatever you want. The only power you need is to listen. Then you can travel in time.

String theory reckons all the particles in the universe are actually infinitesimal strings vibrating, like on a guitar…

I'll go with that. You ever seen all that stuff when they basically put random sand on like a metal surface, and then get a violin bow, and it all re-forms into geometric shapes? All the stuff I learned doing fucking acid has actually been scientifically proven.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

Well, I can reveal something. Scott [Walker]'s family got in touch with me, because I was friends with him. Scott wanted me to use one of his guitars, and a representative of the family flew from Denmark with the guitar to put it in my hand in Sheffield. On the new album, everything that's a guitar solo [was played on] Scott's beautiful, very old Telecaster, with love. I also used my dad's old Gretsch and a guitar that Duane Eddy gave me. The album most definitely is a family affair.

As told to Ian Harrison

Richard Hawley's In This City They Call You Love is out on May 31 on BMG. See Standing At The Sky's Edge at the Gillian Lynne Theatre on Drury Lane, London.

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LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Buck Dharma

Blue Öyster Cult's singer/guitarist genuflects before The Beatles' Rubber Soul (Parlophone, 1965).

Like so many people of my era, seeing The Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show for the first time [on February 9, 1964] was life-changing. It was when I heard She Loves You for the first time! They were clearly phenomenal creators and performers, but it also made me think, I could do this too, this is possible. I knew I was never gonna be Elvis Presley, just like I was never gonna be Prince, but The Beatles looked to me like regular guys, like I was.

So I got every record after that, which is just an incredible progression of great, great music. Then you got to *Rubber Soul*, and the breadth of the music on it, and how it was a 40-minute, two-sides experience. It was phenomenal, and a high-water mark. The ensemble texture and the cohesiveness of The Beatles on that record is great, and I loved the acoustic guitars. Just listening to Norwegian Wood, Drive My Car, Nowhere Man, Think For Yourself – George is underappreciated, all his songs stick out to me. I was 17, 18, in college, playing in a band with Albert Bouchard, the original drummer in Blue Öyster Cult. Before that I'd been in a surf band playing instrumentals, I hadn't even thought of singing. Now you'd realised that the words were a very important part of it – Don Henley said the same thing. It was the LP era, the single wasn't the thing any more. That possibility had opened in our minds.

For me, the first Doors LP was a big deal. The first Grateful Dead record was a big deal. I loved the Stones' *Between The Buttons* – all peak moments, so it's hard to choose one record. But *Rubber Soul* is a Desert Island Disc, you know, and I was very fortunate to be alive at this time. I missed them at Shea Stadium, but I've never seen The Rolling Stones either. When I get my time machine, I'll go back.

As told to Ian Harrison

Blue Öyster Cult's Ghost Stories is out on April 12 on Frontiers Music.

PEAKY BLINDERS CREATOR STEVEN KNIGHT TAKES ON 2-TONE WITH THIS TOWN

PEAKY BLINDERS, BBC's historical Birmingham crime caper fronted by Cillian Murphy, was known for its first-rate musical cues, from using Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds' Red Right Hand as its theme to other contributions from Bowie, P.J. Harvey, Radiohead and more.

Now Peaky Blinders creator and writer Steven Knight has a new six-part series ready to go, in which music fulfils a more central and motivating role. Described as a "high-octane thriller and family saga", it takes place in Birmingham and Coventry in 1981 just as the ska boom led by The Specials and the 2-Tone label was peaking, and riots were erupting across the country. Entitled This Town, The Specials' complete lyric "is coming like a Ghost Town" seems apposite.

"It's about Birmingham, it's about Coventry, and it's about the music that I was listening to in the early '80s," Knight tells MOJO. The cast includes Downton Abbey's Michelle Dockery, Jordan Bolger (The Book Of Boba Fett) and David Dawson (My Policeman), while the plot involves music as an escape route from desperate circumstances. "They're four young people connected by family and by friendships," says Knight of his core characters. "The only way they can get out of the situations they're in – one's being drawn into the IRA, one's being drawn into gangs – is through music, or by getting famous. The music's in the background, and then it becomes the foreground. They don't set out to form a band, but it is absolutely a lifeboat for them."

The soundtrack will include vintage reggae by Desmond Dekker, Jimmy Cliff and Prince Buster, post-punk sounds from The Clash, Blondie and The Specials, and to play out, era-relevant covers by Gregory Porter, Self Esteem, Celeste and others. The group – Knight won't reveal their name but says it involves an expletive – will also perform songs written for the series by poet Kae Tempest, producer Dan Carey and singer-songwriter ESKA. "The brief was, It's 1981 – what would you have written then?" says Knight. "The characters are responding to what's going on in their lives and putting it to a soundtrack that's current at the time."

He stresses this is no strict re-enactment exercise, and no 2-Tone authenticity advisors were sought. "I'm not here to get it right," says Knight, who avoids received history and prefers gathering contemporary witnesses' experiences – he admits certain ex-Birmingham City FC hooligan 'Zulus' were among them – the better to avoid "normal drama" and arrive at the "funniest, weirdest, darkest stuff, that actually did happen."

He hasn't watched 2-Tone live movie Dance Craze, or Shane Meadows' skins-in-the-North drama This Is England, either. "What I'm trying to do is get that chaotic truth about people who aren't reading the script of history, because it hasn't been written yet. Everybody's just doing what they're doing and it's chaos. The people responding to that music were black and white, at a time when black and white people were allegedly not together and not mixing. It happened not because anybody said 'this can be a great idea'. It just happened."

Multiple series of This Town are planned. "I shouldn't be giving all this away but I've got the roadmap of where these people go," he says. "But series one is, let's get them there."

Ian Harrison

This Town comes to BBC One and BBC iPlayer soon.

"I'm not here to get it right."
STEVEN KNIGHT

BBC, Sandra Roeser, Alamy

Ska'd for life: (main pic) Eve Austin (left) and Levi Brown in a scene from Steven Knight's This Town; (above) 2-Tone's torch bearers The Specials.

Six-string theory: (left) Bill Frisell in 1995; (above) Bill today, still "trying to learn and steal from everybody."

JAZZ GUITARIST BILL FRISELL ON LEARNING HOW TO *BE*

AVANT TRUMPETER Ambrose Akinmusire needed an encore. It was in early 2024, during a short European tour of Akinmusire's Owl Song trio, alongside guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Greg Hutchinson. Akinmusire called out Tenderly, a 1946 romantic waltz made a standard by the likes of Sarah Vaughan, Bill Evans, and Nat King Cole.

Frisell had to admit that – in spite of his half-century spent becoming one of music's most distinct and influential modern guitarists – he had never played it. When the gig was done, he downloaded 50 versions. "I've just been obsessing over that song," Frisell admits from his home in Brooklyn. "I'm just trying to learn."

A Colorado clarinettist who came to guitar rather late, Frisell steadily emerged with a singular instrumental voice – patient and thoughtful, with a thin and tender tone – after a mid-'70s stint at the Berklee College of Music. Extended relationships with John Zorn and Paul Motian anchored his emergence through the '80s. He has added his sparkling leads to the downtempo doom of Earth, gallivanted with the Ginger Baker Trio, and worked sessions for Paul Simon and Marianne Faithfull. Now 73, Frisell's artistic core hasn't wavered since Thelonious Monk and Gary Burton upended his high-school worldview when he saw them play a local amphitheatre on a beer-sponsored package tour: to know more music.

> "You get as close as you can. What you end up with, that's your sound."
> **BILL FRISELL**

"I still feel the same: I'm just trying to learn and steal from everybody I can steal from, and whatever comes out is the approximation of what I'm trying to get to," he says. "You get as close as you can. What you end up with, that's your sound."

That sound remains front and centre on *Orchestras*, a mesmerising new two-disc set that Frisell and his trio cut with dual European orchestras. It serves as a kind of greatest hits for Frisell and also a verification of his versatility. Despite the grandeur of the settings, the trio retains their improvisational vim. "At one point, the conductor looks at us and says, 'Where are your charts?' We didn't need them," he says. "We weren't laying down parts for the orchestra to follow. It was this amazing playground to just *be*."

Speaking of charts, soon after Frisell returned home from the tour with Akinmusire, a Brooklyn guitar shop acquired the Gibson that Tony Mottola used for Johnny Mathis's exquisite if saccharine two-guitar take on Tenderly. The $185,000 price included Mottola's handwritten charts for that very song. Frisell wasn't looking to buy, but he was looking to take the instrument for a spin later that day, to see what its sound might reveal. "Hopefully I can look at the music he wrote for this song I've been obsessing over," he says. "I just want to see it before it goes in a collector's vault somewhere."

Grayson Haver Currin

Orchestras is released by Blue Note on April 19.

BILLS 'N' THRILLS

Free Frisell, times three

Naked City
Torture Garden
(SHIMMY DISC/EARACHE, 1990)

The longest songs on this 42-track monster sprint just past the minute mark. Frisell made every moment count inside John Zorn's splenetic exercise; his solo during Jazz Snob Eat Shit coils his approach into seconds.

Paul Motian, Bill Frisell, & Joe Lovano
I Have The Room Above Her
(ECM,2005)

"I felt he wanted me for the way I thought," says Frisell of Motian. To hear the delicate tangle Frisell, Motian, and saxophonist Joe Lovano craft during Dance is to hear them think as one.

Bill Frisell
Music IS
(OKEH, 2018)

Frisell has a plethora of stellar ensemble records, but few in his catalogue capture his lyricism and assured style like this, where careful layers of guitar shimmer like sunlight across some sylvan lake.

Sebastian Mlynarski

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> "I saw Eliza Carthy being a real badass and said, I want to do that."
> KATHERINE PRIDDY

Katherine Priddy: pivoting between folk and heavy rock traditions.

ANOINTED BY FOLK ROCK ROYALTY, KATHERINE PRIDDY COMES OUT SWINGING

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Nick Drake, Kate Rusby, John Martyn, Vashti Bunyan
- Priddy is a fan of heavy rock; Mötley Crüe are a favourite. She's also very fond of rock climbing.
- Priddy wrote Wolf, her first single while doing A-levels, inspired by reading Wuthering Heights and falling in love with the character of Heathcliff.
- Her twin brother and their parents are in the choir on I'm Ready To Go, the new album's closing duet with George Boomsma.

KEY TRACKS

- Wolf
- Selah
- Ready To Go

WHEN KATHERINE Priddy released her first EP, Wolf, in 2018, she quickly gained one very auspicious fan. "She has a really pretty, expressive voice, and her songs are engaging – borderline poetry in the lyrics, so it isn't all revealed at once," Richard Thompson told MOJO, as he picked Priddy as the best thing he'd heard that year. "I love the echoes of the British tradition, and indeed the folk rock tradition."

In the six years between that first EP and her new second album, *The Pendulum Swing*, Priddy has built an impressive reputation and following for those accomplished, original folk songs and her pure, beautiful voice. Thompson asked her to join him on tour. So did Vashti Bunyan, The Chieftains and Martin Carthy.

"That gig with Martin Carthy was really special," says Priddy. "The first time I told my mum I wanted to be a musician was when I was eight or nine and I'd gone to watch Waterson Carthy play. I saw Eliza Carthy on-stage being just a real badass and I said to mum, I want to do that." That night she got Eliza to sign her ticket. "And when I opened for Martin Carthy a decade later I got him to sign the same ticket."

Priddy was in her mid-teens when she started writing songs in her bedroom. At 16 her music teacher persuaded her to enter a songwriting contest, which she came very close to winning. But rather than see it as a step towards a music career, it made her drop the idea. "I was very uncomfortable singing in front of people at that stage. I really enjoyed playing music but I did it for myself really. What I wanted to do was go to uni."

She studied literature. "Books and stories have always been a big part of my life," she says. "For me, lyrics are very, very important. Writing lyrics is the bit I enjoy the most." As for the music, "I'm not really fixed on one genre, I just like good music that has something to say." There was always music on in the family home – Steeleye Span, Joni Mitchell, John Renbourn, Nick Drake (Priddy played on the 2023 Drake tribute album, *The Endless Coloured Ways*), Zappa, classical, jazz, choral music and heavy metal.

Her childhood house in Birmingham, where she's speaking from, plays a big part in Priddy's new album. "A lot of what it's all about is the pendulum swing of wanting to leave and wanting to come back home."

As a full-time musician now, how does she feel about spending more and more time away?

"The important thing for me, if I continue to do music, is having a home that feels like mine that I can come back to. As much as I love my parents' house – I was living here for a while when I was writing this album – I felt like I should be out there doing my own thing. So I've got a nice little place in Birmingham that I rent. But I still dream of having a canal boat one day. I'll see how many CDs I manage to shed," she laughs, "before I get one of those!"

Sylvie Simmons

Katherine Priddy's The Pendulum Swing is out now on Cooking Vinyl.

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SAT 15 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
MON 17 BRISTOL BEACON
TUE 18 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
WED 19 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
FRI 21 GLASGOW SEC ARMADILLO
SAT 22 GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE
MON 24 CARDIFF WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE
TUE 25 POOLE LIGHTHOUSE
WED 26 BRIGHTON DOME
FRI 28 IPSWICH REGENT THEATRE
SAT 29 LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL

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MON 07 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
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SUN 20 OCTOBER*
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NURSE. FIGHTER. GARAGE-ROCK REBEL ON THE SOMALILAND FRONTLINE... MEET SAHRA HALGAN

IT'S 30 DEGREES in Hargeisa, and Sahra Halgan is spending a slow Friday afternoon recovering from a concert she hosted in Somaliland's capital the night before. "During the war, we lost all our musicians," she laments. "Today, if you are a bad singer, you use a producer, they give you a nice voice. You sing like someone who can sing, but you can't sing live. At my arts centre you have to sing live. Tell everyone to come. I invite them."

It's an enticing proposition: musically, Hargeisa lies at the heart of Africa's funkiest region, bordered and influenced by Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia, the latter claiming Somaliland as its own. With decolonisation, Somaliland (compact and British) and Somalia (sprawling and Italian) were united in 1960, with an Italy-approved government that grew increasingly authoritarian. Something had to give: Somaliland rebelled; Somalia tried to crush the insurrection but was then engulfed in its own civil war; Somaliland declared independence, and still does, but the international community turned its back.

Halgan was a teenager when she joined the liberation movement in the late 1980s. "Sometimes you don't have a choice. We were under bombardment, so I became a nurse, putting stitches in wounds. We didn't have painkillers so I sang to try to give relief to the patients. They asked me to sing on the radio to help the morale of our fighters. Singing can be as useful as a big artillery."

As war swept the country, Halgan fled to France, where she got a job helping fellow refugees in Lyon, and would sing to them.

> **"Under bombardment, we didn't have painkillers so I sang to try to give relief to the patients."**
> **SAHRA HALGAN**

Once again, her voice led to greater opportunities: she met guitarist Maël Salètes and percussionist Aymeric Krol, and the Sahra Halgan Trio was born, recording *Faransiskiyo Somaliland*, a blend of traditional rhythms, desert ululations and garage band rock, in 2015. Four years later, with *Waa Dardaaran*, they hit a groove that combined the snaking guitar lines of Tinariwen with an undeniably punk-like energy. Halgan, meanwhile, dominates any stage with the grace required of a daughter of a country that prides itself on its poetry.

She laughs explaining the schism between traditional Somaliland lyrics and rock'n'roll. "In my culture, you can't just sing 'I love you'. Not directly. The first time you meet someone, you have to explain your feelings: 'I see you and the sky is blue, the birds are green.' You have to go around and around. Love is the last word."

More important to Halgan, however, is reaching an audience that knows nothing about her home. "I like it when people listen, then ask me where Somaliland is. My music is not just for dancing or making money, I want people to know my life and to talk about peace and reconciliation."

David Hutcheon

Sahra Halgan's Hiddo Dhawr is released on Danaya Music on March 29.

Journey in Somaliland: Sahra Halgan and band "talk about peace and reconciliation."

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: The Dur-Dur Band, Ayalew Mesfin, Ali Farka Touré, The Fall
- Halgan's birth name is Sahra Axmed Maxamuud. 'Halgan' was adopted from the independence movement's pirate station, Radio Halgan, and means "fighter".
- *Hiddo Dhawr* (which translates as "promote culture") is both the title of Halgan's latest album and the name of the arts centre she set up in Hargeisa, where she performs on Thursdays and Fridays when in town.
- Between the end of the British Protectorate and the creation of the Somali Republic, Somaliland has been internationally recognised as an independent state for five days (in June-July 1960). In a 2001 referendum, 97 per cent of the electorate voted for independence.

KEY TRACKS

- Dardaaran
- Sharaf
- Kiidhaba

MOJO PLAYLIST

It's the month's best Latin-Smiths, soul-rock and dub-poetics.

1 MARK KNOPFLER'S GUITAR HEROES GOING HOME (THEME FROM LOCAL HERO)
For the Teenage Cancer Trust, Knopfler's joined by players including Hank Marvin, Clapton, Ringo, Townshend, Duane Eddy, Brian May, David Gilmour, Springsteen, and in his last recording, Jeff Beck (above), for a beauteous reprising of the movie theme.
Find it: *YouTube*

2 AFRICA EXPRESS FT. IMS PANIC
Live in Mexico in February, Albarn ignites a Latin-ska take on The Smiths' hit. A tribute to Radio 1's Steve Wright?
Find it: *YouTube*

3 HERMANOS GUTIÉRREZ LOW SUN
From new LP *Sonido Cósmico*, Ecuadorian-Swiss guitar siblings hit an ineffable plateau.
Find it: *streaming services*

4 JESSICA PRATT WORLD ON A STRING
LA singer-songwriter reaches peak loveliness, sung in her silvery, Karen Carpenter timbre. Big sigh.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 PAUL WELLER SOUL WANDERING
From forthcoming new album *66* (out May 24), Weller weatheredly ponders "the sea, the stars and your love" over gospel-flecked soul-rock.
Find it: *streaming services*

6 KING HANNAH BIG SWIMMER (FT. SHARON VAN ETTEN)
Liverpool duo and SVE reflect on the real meanings of bathing, as minimal husk gives way to electrified abandon.
Find it: *streaming services*

7 HAWKWIND THE STAR-SHIP (ONE LOVE ONE LIFE)
Methuselah-astronaut Dave Brock counsels tranquillity, en route to Galaxy 117.
Find it: *Stories From Time And Space (Cherry Red)*

8 MICHAEL HEAD & THE RED ELASTIC BAND AMBROSIA
Confiding and low-key, Mick recalls old bandmates, old times, "hair of the dog and then a liquid lunch."
Find it: *streaming services*

9 YOUTH FT. ALLEN GINSBERG IRON HORSE (THE ORB'S END HATE REMIX)
Beat poet's words posthumously collide with the Killing Joke bassist, The Orb dub it up, Siobhan Fahey adds backing vox.
Find it: *Cadiz LP/streaming services*

10 BROKEN CHANTER YOU'VE GOT TO STOP WORRYING ALL THE TIME
Existential anxiety and Duran Duran-bright guitar, from David MacGregor's third album.
Find it: *streaming services*

Marion Bornaz, Alamy

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Art-rock's **affable Zelig** has **glammed up** in **Roxy Music**, stretched out with **Cale, Gilmour and Eno**. With a memoir penned and **box set looming**, what's next for the gentleman guitarist? **"I'm wiping the slate clean,"** says **Phil Manzanera**.

Interview by **MAT SNOW** • Portrait by **KEVIN WESTENBERG**

IN 1973 SONG IN EVERY DREAM HOME A Heartache, Roxy Music singer Bryan Ferry guides us around a luxury city flat, describing "penthouse perfection" like a crooning estate agent penned by J.G. Ballard or Dennis Potter, before capping one of Roxy's dizziest peaks with a mike-drop punch line, triggering a guitar freak-out so unmuzzled it blows MOJO's mind even now.

Today, said freak-out's architect receives MOJO in his London home. Like Roxy's domestic dystopia, his boasts "open-plan living", though any heartaches have been tidied away to accommodate wall-to-wall pseudo-frescos by Nick De Ville, sleeve designer of the glamorous, groundbreaking records Phil Manzanera made with long-term Roxy bandmates Ferry, reeds man Andy Mackay, drummer Paul Thompson and, on the band's first two albums, pioneer of concepts and electronics Brian Eno. There's also room to acknowledge the guitarist's music outside of Roxy, with John Cale, David Gilmour, Nico and more. Among eye-catching contributions by Alfreda Benge, there's artwork for her husband Robert Wyatt's 1975 classic *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, on which Manzanera played.

Memorabilia abounds, but this rock star palazzo works for its living. Here Manzanera and his wife Claire run the recording studio where this tall, slim, friendly 73-year-old still applies his craft. Covid pressed the pause button, but he used the time to write his story, Revolución To Roxy, which arrives this month, followed later in the year by an 11-CD survey of his solo recordings. One of its treasures, the intro riff to the title track of his 1978 album *K-Scope*, was sampled by Jay-Z and Kanye West on their monster 2012 hit No Church In The Wild. It has subsequently earned Manzanera more than his entire half-century in Roxy Music.

Like his *pied-à-terre*'s location, the guitarist/producer/curator's outward appearance conceals – or perhaps complements – something altogether unexpected. Manzanera is his mother's name, she being a Colombian married to his father Duncan Targett-Adams, on the face of it a conventional member of England's professional middle-classes. But as the book reveals, Targett-Adams was in fact the secret natural son of a touring Italian musician, and, as Manzanera suspects, enjoyed another clandestine identity. Behind the cover of working overseas for the British Council and British Airways' predecessor BOAC, his father was a possible inspiration for the reluctant spy protagonist of Graham Greene's Our Man In Havana.

Revolución To Roxy offers many a yarn, including a "disconcerting" Dylan encounter ("I think he thought I was Mexican!"), the supertrio that never was with 10cc refugees Kevin Godley and Lol Creme ("I've never met two people so incredibly creative"), and his parallel life in Spanish-language music, producing five Grammy-winning albums from Argentina, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Spain.

Then there are his close calls with organised crime in Italy and Colombia, to which he's returning soon to a festival. "My mother used ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Andy Mackay on his "formidable" Roxy oppo.

"First impressions were that he looked formidable, with the beard and the hair – very impressive! But the main thing is how generous he is with his talent. As a guitarist, he has a lot of different styles – think about More Than This. But you could pick any Roxy song – his sounds are so unique."

Kevin Westenberg, Getty

➤ to say, 'Don't go back to Colombia, you'll be kidnapped,'" recalls this hybrid of reticent English gentleman and Latin American groover. "If I thought about it too much, I wouldn't go."

He smiles. "But you can't live your life like that."

For your contemporaries, rock'n'roll offered escape from 1950s British boredom. You, on the other hand, had a ringside seat to the Cuban revolution and an exciting upbringing. So what first brought you to rock?

It was Robin Hood on the telly, no skiffle or rock'n'roll, then in 1957 aged six I was taken to Cuba. My mother liked dancing and was trying to get the little British boy and his brother to wiggle their bums and loosen up in this place with congas and rhythm, rhythm, rhythm and romance – amazing players later discovered for the Buena Vista Social Club in their prime playing at the Tropicana and Sans Souci. Here's me absorbing all this stuff and falling asleep on a table at the Tropicana.

Then my mum started having guitar lessons, and because she was fed up with this little *pendejo* – pain in the arse – pulling on her guitar strings, she taught me *acompañamiento* on the Cuban guitar I still have, singing famous songs like Cielito Lindo.

Elvis appeared on the scene – his films were shown in South America – but rock'n'roll still didn't have a big impact on me. Then the revolution happened and we had to leave, and we went to Hawaii, and it's all Hawaiian music and hula-hula girls…

And Elvis in Blue Hawaii…

Right! Then we went to Caracas, Venezuela, I get a guitar and can play Chuck Berry riffs. So I get it, but second-hand. At school dances with the American college kids, there's a band playing Buddy Holly, and our classmate girls are looking at these boys. So my friend and I say, We've got to get electric guitars. It's the classic thing: girls will look at you if you play.

You were sent to Britain to board at Dulwich College in south London. Is that where your interest in rock picks up?

I get there in September of 1960 then everything happens, that massive onslaught of The Beatles and Stones and all the American stuff fuels my passion. I become completely obsessed. I have two very good friends at school, Bill MacCormick and his brother Ian, who becomes [rock writer] Ian MacDonald. He was the guru, older than me and Bill, and he gave us the most incredible music education.

By the late '60s you'd played guitar in a school band with Bill: Pooh And The Ostrich Feather. Did you ever record?

No, but we did gigs in a church in Dulwich and the West Norwood Library. They were our attempt to emulate our heroes Soft Machine. Through Bill I'd met two embryonic pop stars when I was 16: David Gilmour, and Robert Wyatt who lived near the school at his mum's house. Soft Machine and Pink Floyd were the two coolest bands in London. If you meet somebody famous when you're a teenager, you think maybe *I* could do this.

In 1972, after your prog band Quiet Sun ran out of steam, you joined Roxy Music, the ultimate 'art school' rock group. The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band were a precursor, but were they an influence?

No, but you could see some connection – the sense of humour and *joie de vivre*, a little bit hammy and tongue-in-cheek. We were quite shy *off-stage* – and Bryan [Ferry] still is – but we put all this stuff on like actors as a way not to be nervous *on-stage*. Every new tour we had new outfits. We'd come into the dressing room with our bags and say, "OK, you open your bag first." "What the…? Feathers?!?" I'd open mine, and it was an armadillo outfit. We'd howl with laughter.

Does every great band, however technically proficient, need at least one creative maverick, however technically backward?

Totally. We were the sum of our inadequacies more than our strengths, but the combination added up to the Roxy sound. If I'd been better technically, it probably would have been horrible, loads of scales like Quiet Sun. I didn't want any of that in Roxy. I wanted to be more like The Velvet Underground, textural.

The others brought different things. Eno had systems music, Bryan a mixture of Motown and The Velvet Underground, Andy loved King Curtis, and Paul loved Zeppelin. The Roxy sound was made up of all the little individual contributions, and we created something unique. We weren't a conventional band like The Beatles. We couldn't write songs in a proper way like that; we had to create a musical context for this person who had a strange voice.

A few years ago, trying to make sense of what happened, Eno invented this word 'scenius', which he equated to art movements with people who had similar ideas and thoughts. I wish he'd thought of a better word. I prefer 'collective'.

In 1973 Eno left Roxy. In the book, you hint that part of it was Ferry's jealousy of Eno's success with women.

I don't really know the real story. I think Andy knows more than he's letting on – I'm waiting for him to do a book. And when I told Bryan the other day I was doing my book, I said, quite frankly, *You* should do a book – I'd love to know what the hell was going on.

When Eno left, me and Andy sat down in a café in Holland Park and said, Well, we could throw our toys out the pram but we seem to be doing well so we've got to be a bit more grown-up and somehow make it work. That led to some great tracks, which Andy and I co-wrote with Bryan. We were quite pragmatic.

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Roxy rock star Phil down the years.

1 Cape capers: six-year-old Phil Manzanera dressed as Zorro, Havana, Cuba, 1957.

2 Bear necessities: Phil (left) with Bill MacCormick in school band Pooh And The Ostrich Feather, All Saints Church, Dulwich, 1969.

3 Solar so good: Quiet Sun (from left) MacCormick, Manzanera, Charles Hayward, Dave Jarrett, Clapham Common, London, 1970.

4 Plain sailing: Roxy Music (from left, standing) Paul Thompson, Bryan Ferry, Rik Kenton, Brian Eno, (kneeling) Andy Mackay, Manzanera, London, September 18, 1972.

5 In the Pink: Phil (fourth right) with Robert Wyatt, David Bowie, David Crosby and David Gilmour at the latter's Royal Albert Hall gig, May 29, 2006.

6 Going for gold: Phil and Bryan Ferry pick up discs for *Avalon*.

7 Supergroup dynamic: Manzanera in 801 with Eno, Reading Festival, 1976.

8 The thrill of it all: (from left) Manzanera, Ferry and Mackay get inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 2019.

9 Super fly guy: Phil in 1972 – "the Roxy sound was made up of all the individual contributions. It was unique."

Courtesy Phil Manzanera, Robin Duprez, Richard Wallis (2), Getty (5)

Post-Eno, did you and Ferry co-write songs more conventionally?

Absolutely not. For all the records from *Stranded* [1973] right through to *Avalon* [1982], we'd finish the whole backing track with no idea what the top line was going to be. Bryan would take it away and try and write a top line. If he couldn't, then it was discarded. Or he'd come back and say, "Well, I've got something," and he'd go out into the playing area and start singing Love Is The Drug. Me and Andy and Chris Thomas the producer would clap and whoop and say, Oh my God, it sounds amazing!

He tied it all together…

But it was hit or miss. Out of those five following albums, sometimes it was amazing and sometimes it wasn't. Mother Of Pearl [from *Stranded*] was just a long bit of music, then suddenly it all made sense. When he was on form, he came up with some fantastic lyrics. It really was like magic, a surprise to everybody.

Roxy Music was so varied right up to *Avalon* when we finished. You couldn't predict what the next record was going to sound like; it could be anything.

Between 1973 and '75, banging out four Roxy Music LPs and two of your own, plus contributing to those by Ferry, Mackay and Eno, were you the busiest man in British rock?

I had the opportunity. When I put my hand up to ask can I do something, the A&R guy at Island, Richard Williams, said, "OK, you've got three weeks before going on tour with Roxy again, get on with it." I thought, I'm not going to tell him but I'll do *two* albums. So 12 to six was *Diamond Head* [Manzanera's solo debut] and six to 12 was the Quiet Sun album. That was particularly satisfying because the manager of the Island studio at Basing Street was Muff Winwood, who had turned down Quiet Sun. I had the letter saying that this band has no commercial potential at all. So we secretly made the album without him realising, and when it came out, it got a great review in Melody Maker. When I showed him, it was a sweet moment. But, yeah, lots and lots of work. You can do that in your twenties.

Eno's ousting didn't stop you working on his early solo albums…

We were sharing a flat at the time. Eno was on his uppers and I wanted to help. We didn't go into the black 'til 1984 so there wasn't a lot of money. I set him up in a studio, Majestic, above a bingo hall near my mum's house –Needles In The Camel's Eye [*Here Come The Warm Jets*, 1974] I wrote on my mum's piano in Clapham – and after finishing work on *Stranded*, though I didn't mention it, I would come down and be in the studio with Eno. He had lots of friends who helped as well.

> "Roxy were **quite shy off-stage** – and Bryan still is – but we put **all this stuff on like actors.**"

One of them was King Crimson's Robert Fripp. Did you meet him at those sessions?

We had the same management company, EG, and when you're waiting to see the managers in the little reception area in the office on King's Road, Crimson would be coming in and out and I became friendly with all of them. Fripp was Fripp and I was a little bit scared of him. We used to call him The Beak [ie, the judge]. You'd come up before The Beak!

During your busy mid-'70s you also worked on John Cale's albums *Fear* and *Slow Dazzle*. How was that?

John was brilliant, very funny, very intelligent. We'd asked him to produce *For Your Pleasure* but he was an A&R guy at Warners so couldn't, but recommended Chris Thomas. Chris was a genius and we learned so much from him, all that accumulated knowledge from having worked with George Martin and The Beatles.

Anyway, when Richard Williams rang and said, "Fancy helping John with his album?" I put together a band and we went into Olympic and Sound Techniques with John Wood. Then Cale was becoming absent because I think he was having an affair, and we'd find ourselves in the control room with his wife phoning and we'd say he'd just popped out for a cup of tea.

Cale invited you to come and play on the Nico LP, *The End…*, which he was producing. How was that?

I went into the playing area and plugged in, and she came out of the control room and said to me, "Don't take any notice of him. Do whatever you want." For someone brought up on The Velvet Underground, you're in the room with the Goddess. It was just a thrill.

You produced Split Enz's first album, *Mental Notes*, in 1975. What did that role mean to you?

Neil and Tim Finn had the songs and I brought my team – [engineer] Rhett Davies who worked with me on the Eno albums and *Diamond Head* – to Basing Street. You ensure it's all recorded and mixed properly, and make suggestions here and there, but there isn't a lot to it. It's ➢

terribly easy to record really good people.

Over the years, I've produced 80 albums or something and it hasn't always been that easy. But I've used my accumulated knowledge, my learning from Chris Thomas and Eno. Thinking conceptually I learned from Ian MacDonald. What are we trying to do here? What's this about? It's about seeing the big picture and being a facilitator.

Your music tastes were quite druggy. Did you go there seeking inspiration or recreation yourself?

No, I was always scared of taking acid. I wasn't physically good at taking drugs, hopeless at taking vast amounts of drink or drugs. I wanted to, but it just didn't work for me; I had a few bad experiences instantly. But I could imagine seeing all the colours during psychedelia – I loved the idea of a visual onslaught of colour and movement. Taking on Tomorrow Never Knows with 801 [on 1976 live album *801 Live*] was just so typical of that project. With the MacCormick brothers, Ian and Bill, me and Eno went to a cottage in the country and hatched this whole concept, a total experiment – a conflict between musicians and non-musicians, technique versus anti-technique, and see what happens in true Eno fashion. The idea was a band that only lasts six weeks and a few gigs, of which one got cancelled. So it was the West Runton Pavilion, the Reading Festival – which we almost didn't play because Francis Monkman got stuck in a traffic jam and arrived five minutes before we went on stage – and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which we recorded, and that was it, the six weeks was up and Eno went off to work with Bowie. It's still one of the most revered things I've ever done.

Jay-Z and Kanye West came by your K-Scope riff via Kanye's old school friend, the producer and beat collector 88-Keys [AKA Charles Misodi Njapa]. How did he discover it?

I adore him. He's my hero. He came to a David Gilmour concert, and he thought it was *my* concert, putting on social media to his mates and Jay-Z, "I'm going to Phil Manzanera's concert at Radio City." He came with his vinyl copy of the *K-Scope* album and told me the whole story. He only samples from vinyl from between 1975 and 1979 that he finds in record shop basement bins. He just happened to pick mine up in Brooklyn. First track he puts on: "I'll sample that, slow it down, make something out of it…" Just totally random. He had no idea who Phil Manzanera was.

Did you bombard him with *Diamond Head*, Quiet Sun and 801 hoping lightning might strike twice?

I did say, I've got a great riff on Amazona [from *Stranded*, 1973], but Ice-T had used it [for his 1993 single That's How I'm Livin']. I said, Look, let's set up a Dropbox and I'll send you stuff, but of course I never got around to it. But I saw him on the recent [autumn 2022] Roxy tour and it was so lovely. Just big hugs.

Back to Roxy, do you think the songs' change of mood – from exuberant wit and playfulness to elegant, wistful melancholy – had something to do with Bryan losing fiancée Jerry Hall to Mick Jagger?

I haven't really analysed it in that way, but you might well be right. We'd all moved on, changed in our lives and done lots of different things, so the music that came out was different.

And Roxy actually got bigger…

More Than This [from *Avalon*, 1982] is our most popular track, especially in America. It's very wistful, though not a track we particularly enjoyed playing live because there was not a lot to do. But on this farewell tour, victory lap or whatever, you'd look at people's faces and it meant so much to them – that and Avalon. It's terribly simple, but it does have a resonance with people. The early stuff doesn't really have that, or perhaps in a different way. *Avalon* is very much a Bryan album; it really is a musical reflection of him.

In 1982, just as you finished touring that album, you discovered that Bryan had been making big Roxy decisions without any group discussion, so you quit, as did Andy Mackay. In the subsequent reunion tours, has Bryan ever explained why he behaved as he did?

I understand Bryan a lot more, I think, with age. The reason it takes him ages to do anything is because he wants to create something beautiful. He trained to be a fine artist, so has this single vision, and will take his time and doesn't need to explain it to anyone else. I was brought up with The Beatles, thinking, I want to be a band like the Four Musketeers: one for all and all for one. That was never going to be the Roxy way. I didn't really understand that at the time. I appreciate what he's been trying to do a lot more now than when I was in the middle of it all getting grumpy, my ego in the way. I've got a handle on Bryan at last, and come to terms with what he is: an artist. He really is.

And you?

I don't see myself like that at all. I'm not really an artist. I came from a totally different background, and I approach it in a different way. When I was at Dulwich it was all about being a team player. I loved being in teams, I wanted to be sociable. I'd been brought up feeling almost like an only child so wanted to have loads of friends around, and when I got sent to boarding school, I loved it! I was in the dorm with six or seven other boys. We had a laugh. But Bryan was not like that at all. I think growing up he was into cycling. And Eno called himself 'a small independent mobile unit' so wasn't designed to be in a band either, and that's why I come back to us being a collective rather than a band who are like mates.

Your joint manager Steve O'Rourke put you and David Gilmour together when he was working on *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*. On release, you realised that the song One

Kevin Westenberg

Still fly: Phil Manzanera, always "trying to find that new bit of music" to keep him happy, London, January 10, 2024.

ROXY AND ELSEWHERE

Mambo-ing through Manzanera's highlights: **Mat Snow**.

THE GLAM EXTRAVAGANZA

Roxy Music

★★★★★

Country Life

(ISLAND, 1974)

Unjustly upstaged by its sleeve, Roxy's fourth album boasts exhilarating bangers (All I Want Is You and The Thrill Of It All), honking good times (If It Takes All Night), the deeply sinister (Bitter-Sweet and Casanova), two thrilling Ferry-Manzanera co-writes (Out Of The Blue and Prairie Rose), and throughout a spectacular and lavish banquet of scintillating guitar showcasing his confident mastery of multiple styles aged only 23.

THE AVANT-SUPERGROUP

801

★★★★

801 Live

(ISLAND, 1976)

Reuniting Manzanera with schoolfriend/Quiet Sun bandmate Bill MacCormick and elbowed Roxy multi-instrumentalist Eno, 801 added Lloyd Watson (guitars), Francis Monkman (keyboards) and Simon Phillips (drums) to a project designed to optimise a six-week window of opportunity in the blazing summer of '76. Drawing from their individual repertoires plus The Beatles and Kinks, *801 Live* pristinely captured their third and final show in September 1976, a psych/prog/proto-post-punk masterpiece.

THE COLOMBIAN BROMANCE

Corroncho

★★★★

Corroncho

(EXPRESSION, 2010)

Like Manzanera's mother, Lucho Brieva hails from Colombia's Caribbean coast where folks are dismissed as 'Corronchos' by metropolitan Bogotá; thus the guitarist and his artist-sculptor collaborator (also the second Mr Chrissie Hynde) exuberantly celebrated their joint roots in a swinging, utterly pleasurable Spanish-sung album of Manzanera originals plus songs by Dylan, Hynde and Willie Colón. Like all Manzanera's non-Anglophone projects, it wears both dancing shoes and its heart on its sleeve. *¡Arriba!*

"I wanted to be a band **like the Four Musketeers:** one for all and **all for one.** That was never going to be **the Roxy way."**

Slip was based on a demo you'd given him. O'Rourke took you to lunch and explained the facts of life. What were they?

That I had to accept whatever percentage I got. I would say, Just split it, but Pink Floyd are very protective about everything, about copyrights. Everything is for them. But I was so thrilled to have contributed to a Pink Floyd album, very proud to have that tick in my box, which I still am.

Despite your continuing involvement with Gilmour in both his solo work and Floyd, he fired you mid-world tour, in 2016. You imply in the book that your curating a festival in Puglia, when he expected you to be at his beck and call, had something to do with it.

I can only guess but I think he sensed that my time was up with him, and that I wasn't particularly happy. I'm hopeless being a sideman, a session player. The amount of time I spent in his kitchen with him trying to teach me how to play Wish You Were Here – because of the way he fingers it, I never really played it exactly. I didn't have a light on me when I was playing it on-stage and it was too difficult for lots of technical reasons. I realised that I was messing up, and I was getting frustrated. I think he knew that I wasn't giving him the support that I should, so he took the decision – the right decision. It freed me, really.

It must have been awkward given you and your wives are friends and near neighbours in Sussex.

And we still are; we see each other and it's fine. He needed new input. Without realising, we'd been working together for 10 years or something, and it had run its course. Things run their course, and sometimes you continue when you really shouldn't. It's a life lesson. I think he had got to the point where he needed to be ruthless. I wouldn't do that, but I'm not a bandleader. He has a lot more to lose than I do in terms of his stature, stuff like that. And I'm always happy to get on with another project, so he did me a favour, though at the time I was… baffled.

Did you see Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets – one original Floyd plus mates bringing those psychedelic classics to a global audience?

I really enjoyed it. Having seen the Floyd with Syd at the Roundhouse and the Albert Hall, I thought they did a bloody good job.

Would you consider a similar project, showcasing early Roxy and its 'scenius' offshoots? Perhaps calling yourselves The Bogus Men?

It would be great but needs to have proper financial backing. To do a good show, you need to have good people and you need to pay them properly. So it could end up costing a fortune. What was great about doing the Roxy 'victory lap' tour was that for the first time ever, because of the money put up by Live Nation America, we were able to put our music in the best visual context we've ever been able to do. And that made it incredibly satisfying – a great way to wind up Roxy from a live point of view. Me and Andy [Mackay] have a couple of AM:PM shows coming up in London [March 22 and 23 at All Is Joy, Soho, London]. But they won't be big production numbers. Just very small, quite experimental – as Andy said, like the Arts Lab in the late '60s. So maybe we're starting again!

Then, maybe with the memoir and box set I'm wiping the slate clean and can think about something new. It will always be trying to find that new bit of music that keeps me happy. Ⓜ

Revolución To Roxy, by Phil Manzanera, is published by Expression Books on March 22. A box set follows later in the year.

I Thought I Saw You Again

The voice of ANNE BRIGGS, long silent, reaches us over the decades with a rare beauty and power, on the few recordings this wary but resolute folk artist was persuaded to make. About her, not much else is known, and that's just how she likes it. "I learnt from a very early age to hide behind the song," she tells JIM WIRTH. "That was my umbrella."

LULLING MOJO INTO A FALSE sense of security, Anne Briggs agrees to answer a few more questions…

It is 11pm on a Friday night in December; our telephone conversation with the Greta Garbo of the British folk revival started at an unconventional 9.30. The first miracle came when she answered the phone. The second is that she seems to be prepared to keep talking. "I'm enjoying it in a silly sort of way," she says.

Not exactly unguarded, the 79-year-old has agreed to speak as Topic prepare to release a new edition of her self-titled 1971 solo LP with a bonus 7-inch of out-takes: The Lost Tape. In the context of a modest back catalogue that comprises one EP, a few tracks on compilation albums and three full-length LPs (including one that was only released for the first time in the 1990s), an extra 15 minutes of material is a significant find. There's alternative takes of Sovay and Three Maids a-Milking Did Go (AKA Bird In The Bush), plus two songs she never recorded elsewhere: The Cruel Mother and Bruton Town.

Eternally watchful as she talks from her home in the north of Scotland (Oban is her nearest Tesco's), there is a certain quiet determination as the intensely private Briggs strives to share her story. At one point her voice cracks.

"All this talking," she jokes. "I'm not used to it."

However, if she doesn't mind having a bit of a natter about old times, Briggs has her limits. She speaks to MOJO on the specific condition that we do not ask her about why she decided to quit singing in the early 1970s, and as the timeline of our questioning starts to get close to that murky period, the line suddenly goes dead.

"I've got to finish now," she says curtly. "I've got to finish."

There is no explanation. No goodbye. No call back. She has said what she is going to say. As far as she is concerned, it's over.

THAT TENDENCY TO VANISH HAS CONTRIButed to Briggs' legend, but her colossal reputation hinges on her extraordinary voice and the clutch of gnomic songs she wrote.

Fellow valkyrie Shirley Collins counts Briggs' ecstatic, bouzouki-spangled 1971 version of Willie O'Winsbury as one of the absolute jewels of the folk revival. "It's just the best," she tells MOJO. "Not dressed up at all. She just had the most beautiful voice. She made such an impression on everybody without trying to."

"She's amazing," confirms Lankum's Radie Peat who tells MOJO she has recently been obsessing over the version of The Stonecutter Boy that Briggs recorded for Topic's 1966 collection of erotic ballads, *The Bird In The Bush*. "I just absolutely love it. She would definitely have been an influence on me when I started."

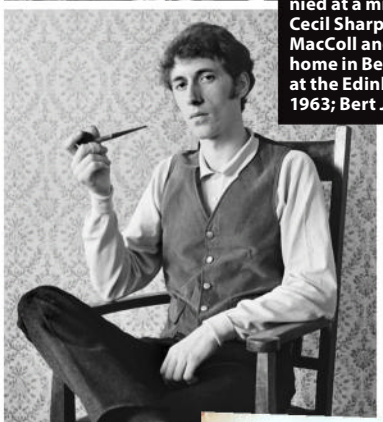
Briggs' influence extends beyond folk; Scritti Politti's Green Gartside recorded an EP of Briggs' songs in 2020, and felt her unaffected style was "a precursor to the anti-professionalism of DIY".

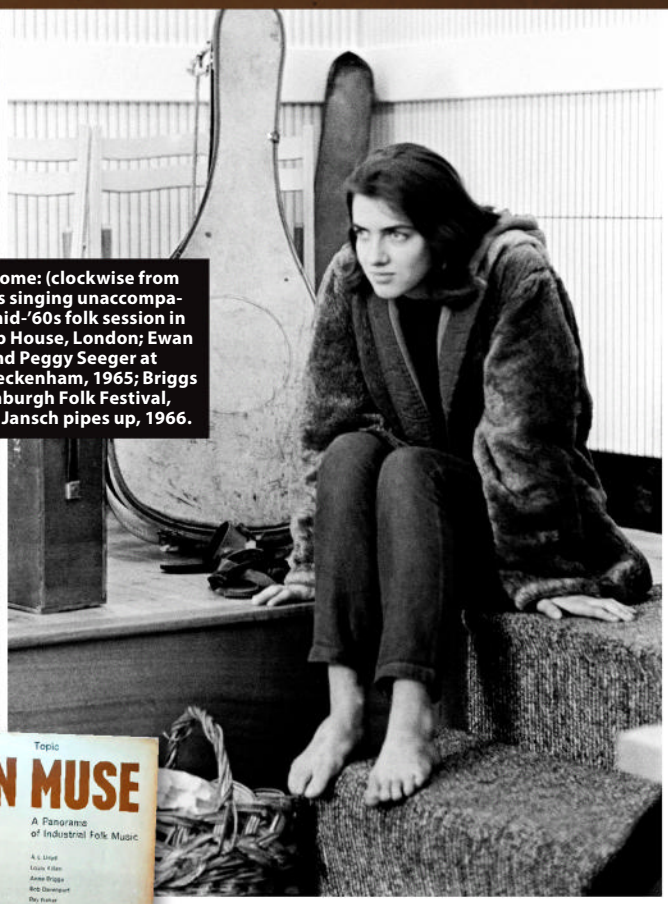
Singers of the 1960s British folk revival can sound over-fussy, academic, a well-meaning yearning for authenticity metastasising into buttoned-up ➢

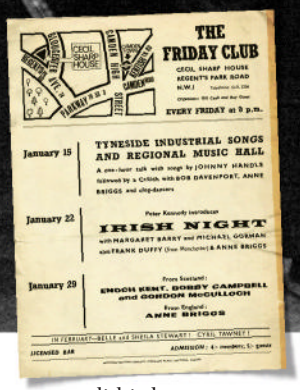
Courtesy of Phil Smee

Disappearing act: Anne Briggs looks to go her own way, 1971.

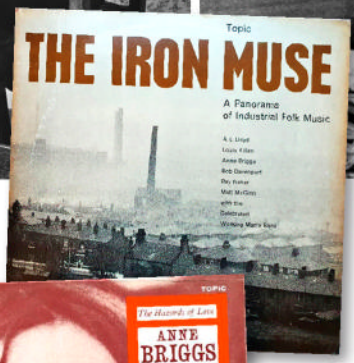
"I really liked all the old words that you didn't hear very often – they had an extra dimension." ANNE BRIGGS







Time has come: (clockwise from left) Briggs singing unaccompanied at a mid-'60s folk session in Cecil Sharp House, London; Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger at home in Beckenham, 1965; Briggs at the Edinburgh Folk Festival, 1963; Bert Jansch pipes up, 1966.



SLOPPILY-DRESSED, JACK KEROUAC-LITERATE folkniks like Briggs were not exactly welcomed in Toton, the village near Nottingham where she grew up. "I was called a bohemian," she says lugubriously. "I didn't like wearing skirts. And if I wasn't in school uniform I was mostly in jeans. I was considered pretty outré."

Born in 1944, to a mother and father who died when she was young, Briggs was subsequently raised by her aunt. "I didn't even know who I was or what my name was or who I belonged to for many years," she admits, but for all that, she grew up in a loving, working-class household, albeit one with very little in the way of music or culture. "There was only three books in the house, and one of them was a Karma Sutra," she says. "Abridged edition."

Briggs failed the eleven-plus exam that would have sent her to grammar school ("I couldn't do maths") but looked set to be a secondary modern success story. As she worked through her A-levels, there was talk of university and art college, but she had her own ideas. At the age of 17, she ran away to join the folkies.

Initially smitten by the raw blues of Big Bill Broonzy and Lead Belly, Briggs performed Woody Guthrie songs in Nottingham coffee bars, and had her own epiphany when she first heard native British folk songs on the radio. "That was my music – I was riveted," she remembers. "I really liked all the old words that you didn't hear very often because they meant so much more than a lot of the words that were replacing them somehow – they had an extra dimension."

When Centre 42 – a trade union-funded initiative to bring culture to the provinces – came to Nottingham looking for local performers, Briggs auditioned and was invited to perform. Peggy Seeger, who was on the programme along with her husband Ewan MacColl and fellow revival giant A.L. Lloyd, saw what may have been her first big show.

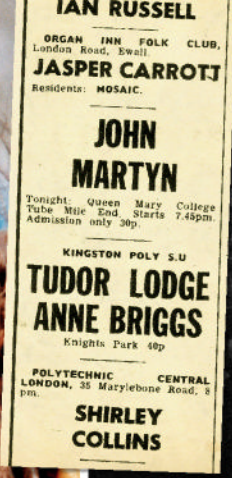
"When she opened her mouth to sing, honest to God, it was angelic," Seeger tells MOJO. "It was a child's voice with a woman's conformity. Briggs instinctively did it her own way, restyling her material and allowing the power of it to rip through her. As she says: "The songs sang me."

Initially an unaccompanied singer, her piercing renditions of Lowlands or The Recruited Collier, recorded when still a teenager, remain sublimely unearthly, while the best of her own songs – Living By The Water, The Time Has Come, Summer's In – have a brilliant concision; stripped of extraneous detail, they hint at something huge, unknowable.

The cover image of the 1971 album – Briggs' silhouette walking determinedly out of shot, pursued by her lurcher, Clea – seems to sum up her elusive MO, though Briggs insists this stroke of marketing genius was anything but deliberate – just a lucky shot that her partner Pat Delap snapped when she wasn't looking.

A clearer image would have revealed that the only thing stopping her pulverised jeans from falling down was some carefully deployed baling twine. "I had virtually no possessions," explains the Ur-hippy. "I didn't look like other women on record covers with lipstick and make-up and a big smile and pretty clothes. I was no frills. I was a no-frills girl."

Alamy, Brian Shuel, Courtesy of Phil Smee, Getty (4)



Sing a song for you: (clockwise from left) Briggs the "pure soul"; Martin Carthy at the King & Queen, Foley Street, London, 1962; Briggs with (from left) Ray Fisher and A.L. Lloyd recording Topic's *The Iron Muse*, 1962.

empathy. She was terrified. And she just stood and looked into space. She didn't try to engage. Pure soul, pure melody."

Briggs never lost her terror of performing, and there was certainly precious little between-song chat as she started out singing on the folk club scene, but her weird, ecstatic delivery carried her through. "I learned from a very early age to hide behind the song," she says. "It's not me the audience is interested in: it's the song. That was my umbrella."

BRIGGS' FAMILY WERE HORRIFIED BY HER DECISION to cut loose, but she was determined to be independent. Moving to London, she briefly stayed with MacColl and Seeger (harking back to less eco-aware times, Seeger sheepishly recalls asking the green-fingered Briggs to clear her lawn of worms) but was not convinced to join their roundhead folk faction, the Critic's Group. "It was like mind control," Briggs remembers. "It was really strong and strange."

Instead, with Lloyd helping to build up her repertoire, Briggs was taken in by revival house mother Gill Cook (who worked at Collett's – London's top folk record shop) and launched herself onto the London scene.

Folk pathfinder Martin Carthy had heard plenty about her before he saw her sing at the Troubadour in Earl's Court, but she more than lived up to her billing. "She was the eighth wonder of the world," he tells MOJO today. "Her timing was gorgeous and she put variations in which just blew you away. She was very beautiful and she was only a kid."

The wunderkind made her recording debut on Topic's 1963 compilation of industrial songs *The Iron Muse*, and then recorded a solo EP of unaccompanied songs which finally limped into the record racks in 1964. By this time she was mixing with Humberside firebrands The Watersons and had fallen back in with freewheeling Scottish guitarist Bert Jansch. By the magic of beatnik radar, the pair had met in 1961 after Briggs hitched up to Edinburgh, and they fell into a loose relationship in London which produced a number of original songs conceived at Jansch's revival flophouse in Somali Road, West Hampstead, among them Wishing Well and Go Your Way My Love.

"He was shy, very young, but then I was a year younger than him," Briggs remembers of her kindred spirit. "We discovered we could write songs together. We really responded to each other and without any commitments or anything. It was just what we did."

Although Jansch recorded some of the material they wrote in the '60s (and the Alan Price Set cut her freewheelin' The Time Has Come), Briggs was too busy surviving to find her way into a studio. Sustained by seasonal agricultural work between playing club dates, Briggs was the "lost child" who was "running wild" in Richard Thompson's elegiac 1994 song Beeswing.

Her next move followed an unusual blind date. After meeting Briggs in London, The Dubliners introduced her to Johnny Moynihan of impish revivalists Sweeney's Men on a trip to Dublin. "She was wilder than I was," he remembered in a 1997 interview. "A tomboy with a rakish grin but stunningly beautiful."

Briggs spent several carefree summers in Ireland from the mid-'60s, occasionally living in a caravan with Moynihan, busking and doing just enough to survive. "Ireland at that stage was unspoiled," she says fondly. "It was full of music. The country, particularly. And there were hosts of travellers – I went to meet them regularly and joined in with their sessions.

"It was ideal at the time for someone in my circumstances; nothing tied me down. I was free to go where I wanted when I wanted."

Famously, she spent several weeks entirely alone on a beach in the west of Ireland, a spell that inspired the luminous Living By The Water (key line: "Because I keep no company I make no enemies").

"I just wanted to have that peace with the countryside," Briggs says. "The beaches and the shoreline and the tidal pools. And I'd sit and play my bouzouki and sing songs. I got rid of all the tensions of living in the city. I just shed it all and just stayed by myself." ➢

IF IT WAS A DREAMY TIME, IT WAS NOT SET TO LAST. Due to quarantine rules, Clea could not join her in Ireland, so Briggs moved back to England, accepting that the dog needed stability even if she didn't. Settling for a time in a caravan in Suffolk, Briggs made a renewed effort to make music pay. The first fruit was the Topic album, which was dominated by unaccompanied traditional songs, but also featured her versions of Go Your Way My Love and Living By The Water, plus a mighty, gaunt version of the traditional Blackwater Side.

Briggs was not initially that impressed by her own record. "I was pleased with the opportunity to give the songs an airing," she says nonchalantly. "But I hadn't realised I was a good singer – and I didn't do that until I stopped singing."

If Briggs did not recognise her potential, Jansch's sharp-elbowed manager Jo Lustig did. "He thought he could make a Joan Baez out of me," she says disdainfully. "He didn't realise."

Lustig set up a recording contract for Briggs with CBS for 1971's *The Time Has Come*. The photo on the sleeve was out of focus, but the music inside was less fuzzy round the edges. Briggs' songs – the title track, Tangled Man, Everytime – represent a subtle shift into a cagey kind of confessional songwriting.

"It was all a bit self-indulgent really," she says dismissively. "The spare ones, the spartan ones: I was happy with those. That was me connecting with it all."

With space to fill, Briggs interleaved her own work with songs by her friends, not least Steve Ashley's Fire And Wine and a version of Fine Horseman that stands up to the Lal Waterson original: one of the crowning jewels of Waterson's *Bright Phoebus* LP.

"The album was an attempt on my part to actually try something different and also perhaps make some money, because I knew I was having a child," Briggs says ruefully. "And before I really understood where Jo was at, I thought maybe he was trying to do the right thing. How naive."

A miserable May 1971 show supporting Jansch at the Royal Festival Hall, where the heavily pregnant Briggs was crammed into a pink maternity outfit (and then apparently got lost while trying to get off-stage), killed off any lingering curiosity about being a professional musician, but – expecting her second child in 1973 – she was persuaded to give recording one more try.

Unreleased until 1996, *Sing A Song For You* edged tentatively toward folk rock. Hearing that Steve Ashley – late of The Albion Country Band – had formed an electric group, Briggs mailed him a tape of new songs (since lost, sadly) and asked his outfit, Ragged Robin, to come up with arrangements. "Mainly she had recorded on her own, so it was a real radical change," Ashley tells MOJO.

Briggs spent a day rehearsing the material in a pub in Little Bealings, Suffolk, and for a while, things seemed promising. Ashley explains: "When we first sat down together and had a bash at it, it was terrific. Summer's In especially. But when we went into the studio, it wasn't so easy to recreate."

Fiddle virtuoso Barry Dransfield guested on the sessions, but it was not to be a happy experience. "I was really very pregnant and it didn't work," says Briggs. "I couldn't breathe properly. I couldn't let go."

The album was quietly shelved, and with Briggs moving with Delap to live in northern Scotland, her musical career was effectively over.

SPEAKING TO MOJO'S COLIN HARPER IN 1997, BRIGGS was grimly practical as she explained why it all came to an end. "If you want a reason why I stopped singing it's 'cos I met my husband, which meant I got better feeding and I got a roof over my head."

There may well be more to it than that, but with two children to look after, Briggs's priorities had certainly changed. On *Sing A Song For You*'s title track she worries how imminent environmental collapse will affect her infant daughter, while her contemporary rendition of Sovay – a traditional song about a female highway robber – has a sense of unease at its core, forged in the knowledge that bad things can happen to women out alone on the roads at night.

Briggs spent much of the following decades working as a market gardener, in Lincolnshire for a time, and later in the Inner Hebrides (where she apparently ran a tea room). Attempts were made to bring her back to the stage in the early '90s; she made a sparkling appearance alongside Jansch on a 1992 Acoustic Routes TV programme and a handful of solo appearances, but a tour supporting Martin Carthy and Fairport Convention fiddler Dave Swarbrick proved calamitous.

"She backed out after two or three gigs," says Carthy sadly. "I just remember her being very, very nervous. People were expecting too much; they were waiting for a choir of angels when she was just this very ordinary person with this fabulous talent. She kept saying that she was pitching everything too high; it sounded OK to me, but she had no self-belief at all."

"It Was A Natural Voice"

PEGGY SEEGER expands on the unique gifts of Anne Briggs.

"SHE HAD A brilliant voice," says Peggy Seeger as she tries to get to the heart of Anne Briggs' lasting appeal. While playing with her then husband Ewan MacColl, Seeger first saw Briggs on-stage in Nottingham in 1962, and while she could sense the then 17-year-old's acute distress at being in front of an audience, she also noticed a steely resolve. "She didn't try to engage with us. I could feel her nervousness. And she did what the real folk singers do when they sing songs that are close to themselves. She just stood and looked out into space."

That sense of distance is crucial to Briggs' art.

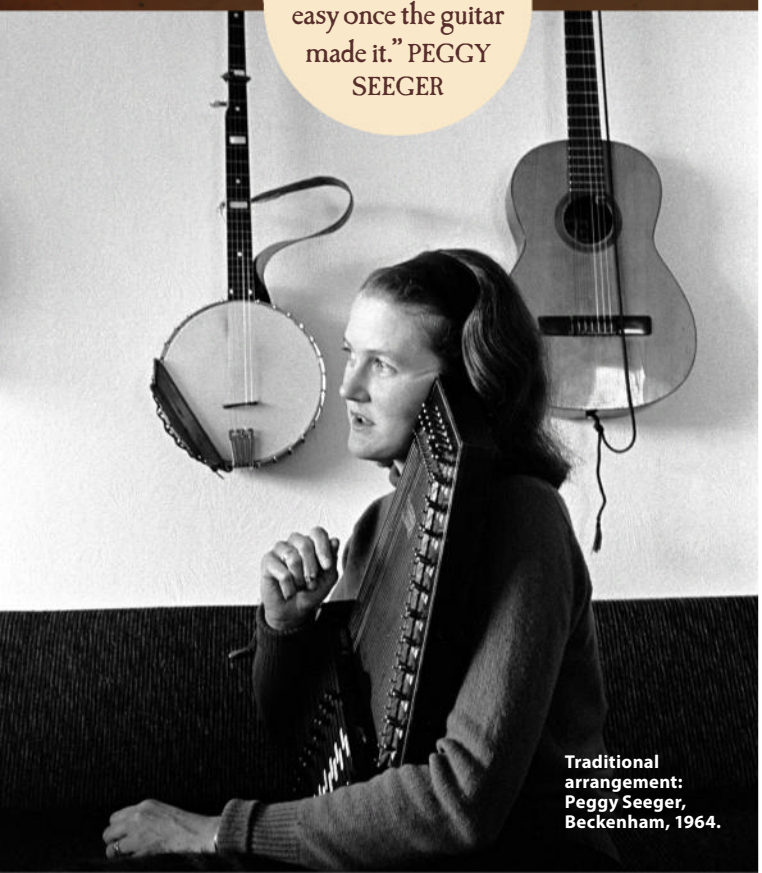
"It was a natural voice," Seeger explains. "It wasn't trying to interpret emotionally. One of the strong things about folk songs is that you sing them straight. You don't try and tell people how to respond. You're presenting a skeleton of a story, and each listener can put their own story onto that skeleton, and that's the way Annie sang. She looked into the distance and threw the skeleton at you."

That astringent, unaccompanied approach was crucial to Briggs' appeal but Seeger felt that times changed in the early '70s, with audiences hipped to Bob Dylan and Fairport Convention unable to deal with folk in its purest form. "Unaccompanied singers didn't have it easy once the guitar made it," she says.

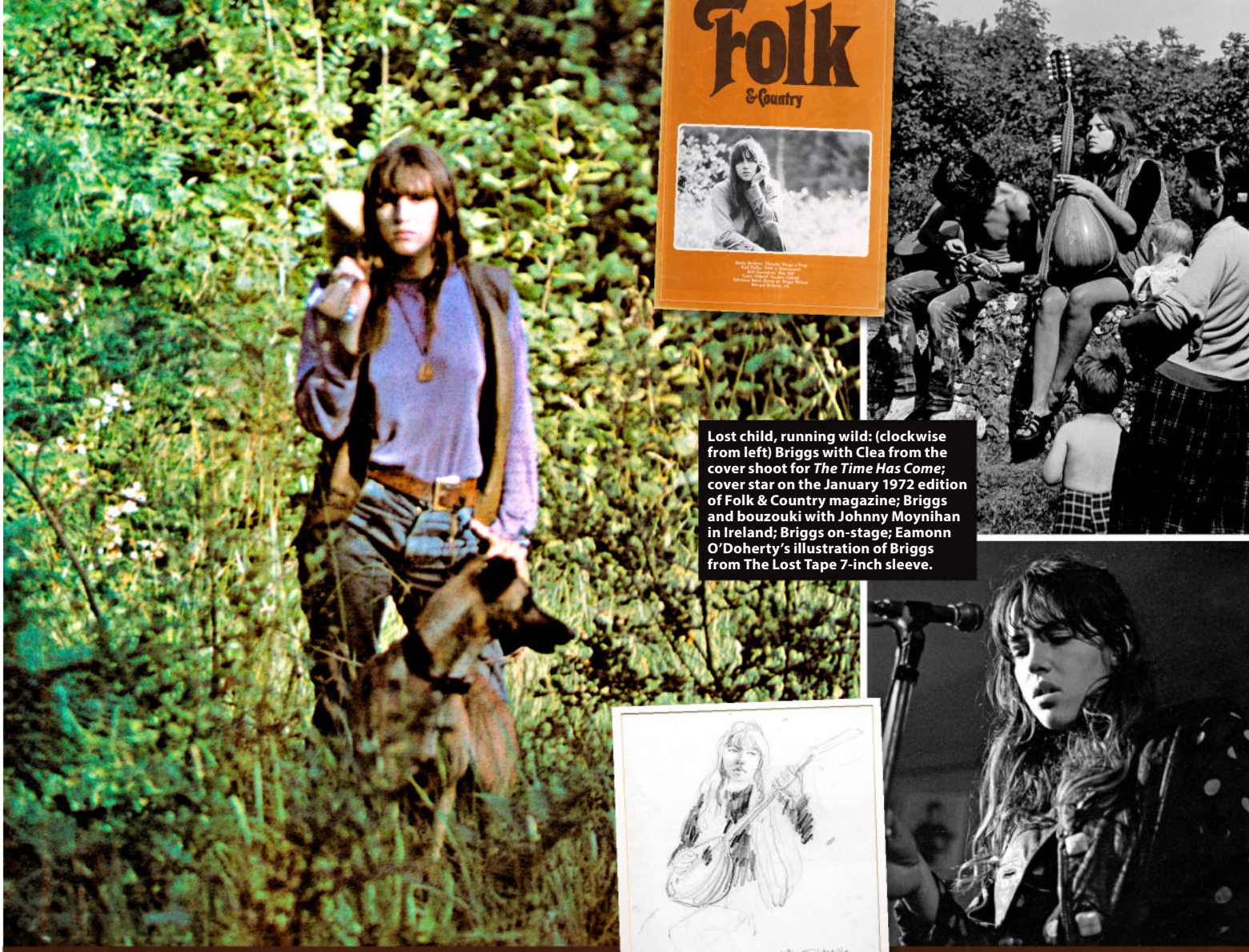
However, in the context of the early folk revival, the direct line that Briggs seemed to possess to her material was something wondrous.

"The voice carried it because the voice was non-committal and lovely, it really was," Seeger says. "And that's the way an awful lot of field singers sang, the ones that we collected songs from. They just sat there solidly, sometimes with their hands on their knees and looked into the distance like Annie did, and just let the song out."

"Unaccompanied singers didn't have it easy once the guitar made it." PEGGY SEEGER

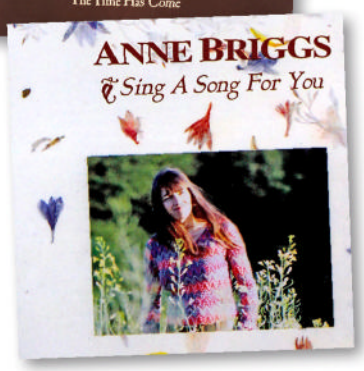


Traditional arrangement: Peggy Seeger, Beckenham, 1964.



Lost child, running wild: (clockwise from left) Briggs with Clea from the cover shoot for *The Time Has Come*; cover star on the January 1972 edition of Folk & Country magazine; Briggs and bouzouki with Johnny Moynihan in Ireland; Briggs on-stage; Eamonn O'Doherty's illustration of Briggs from The Lost Tape 7-inch sleeve.

"I didn't look like other women on record covers with lipstick and make-up. I was no frills. I was a no-frills girl." ANNE BRIGGS



Jansch, who died in 2011, kept on at her to record again but Briggs resisted. "I gave her a MiniDisc player to record with, but she's not very good with hi-tech," he said. "I probably should have given her a cassette player."

"She always was understandably suspicious of the whole music business," says Ashley, delivering a positive spin. "She didn't want to play the game at all and that was a great strength when you look back. Because it means that the music itself is what's lived on. And that's why people are still being blown away when they put those records on."

AFTER SHE HANGS UP ON MOJO, BRIGGS communicates through an intermediary that it will no longer be possible for her to speak on the phone. The only way she will consider answering any further questions is if we post them to her. More in hope than expectation, a few additional ones are mailed, with a stamped addressed A5 envelope enclosed, just in case. After Christmas, to our surprise, a reply is waiting.

"It's a v. big envelope you sent," Briggs writes on one of two sheets of reporter's notepad paper. "Hope you weren't expecting more."

She writes that she first discovered that she had a cult following when she was about 60. "I find the idea of a 'cult' rather alarming and I don't think it quite fits me," she notes.

The best bits of her musical career, she felt, were the times she spent in Ireland in the '60s. The things that bring her most joy are her children and grandchildren and being outdoors: "I've always derived much pleasure and stimulation from the natural world."

She says she still listens to music ("all types!") but while Shirley Collins returned to recording in 2016 after over 35 years of silence, Briggs is not about to do the same: "I lost my voice a long time ago, so I can't sing."

There's a sadness in that, but while Briggs regrets that she never knew quite how good she was until it was too late, hers is only a sad story if you really want it to be.

"I've always been a happy person," she writes. "I've had a good few knocks, but I've always bounced back pretty quickly."

And that's maybe all we need to know. Briggs has fallen silent once more. As far as she is concerned, it's over.

Anne Briggs by Anne Briggs, remastered on vinyl from the original tapes with a 7-inch of four previously unreleased tracks, is set for release on Topic on April 20.

Marco Vittur, Getty, Pat Delap (courtesy of Humphrey Weightman), Eamonn O'Doherty (2)

Taking Care Of Business?

A treasure trove of unheard tapes and unseen documents relating to Jimi Hendrix has been hidden since the early '70s. Finally, its protector Trixie Sullivan is ready to share its contents with MOJO – along with strong opinions on some abiding Hendrix controversies. "Do you know what bullshit is?" she asks Danny Eccleston. Portrait: Barry Peake

AT MIKE JEFFERY'S OFFICE at 39 Gerrard Street in London's West End, the cupboards were crammed with artefacts and documentation pertaining to the notorious rock manager and club owner's clients: The Animals, Soft Machine and, most notably, Jimi Hendrix. But when bailiffs came calling – the inevitable upshot of Jeffery's tendency not to pay for things – they weren't interested in the archive of demo and master tapes, or the future memorabilia, only the objects of immediate visible value: the furniture. Everything else they dumped on the floor.

"When I went in and saw the mess I nearly died," says Trixie Sullivan, then Jeffery's assistant. Tipped off by the building owner – "a nice Jewish guy; someone said he had a crush on me, I had no idea" – Sullivan arrived in time to rescue stacks of material, some prosaic, some fascinating, which she has looked after ever since. Only now, aged 80 and with her future care to think about, is she looking for a purchaser. Representatives from Experience Hendrix – the company that manages the guitarist's estate and curates his legacy – are booked in to view the material. But not before MOJO has its turn.

Diving into the huge stacks of paperwork in a small office in Pinewood Studios, the realm of film industry professional and Sullivan family friend Pete Sheppard, is to immerse in the day-to-day running of rock bands at the end of the '60s. Here's a postcard from Hawaii from Hendrix to Sullivan in July 1970, on the trip that incorporated his contribution to the movie Rainbow Bridge, plus photographs the incendiary guitarist took on the flight over. And here's a letter from Sullivan to Jeffery, dated January 10, 1969, updating him on Jimi's circumstances. "He's buying new curtains and carpet for the flat and domestication seems to suit him for the moment," Sullivan writes. "You never know how long it will last…"

Among the archive's wealth of tapes, all in perfect condition, most are contemporaneous copies of recordings that Hendrix engineer Eddie Kramer suspects Experience Hendrix have in their library ("Jimi would have a copy, [producer] Chas [Chandler] would have one, and maybe one for Mike," he says). One, a 7-inch box labelled in red biro in Hendrix's own hand, contains early versions – possibly from Mayfair Studios in New York – of songs destined for *Axis: Bold As Love*, including thrillingly raw versions of Up From The Skies and Ain't No Telling that you'd hope would find a home on a future Experience Hendrix release.

Evidence of the risks and rewards of the pop business in the '60s is plentiful. A flurry of telegrams concern Hendrix's inability, due to an apparent leg injury, to fulfil his headline slot at Utrecht's Flight ➢

Can you see me?: (clockwise from left) Jimi Hendrix in 1966; Trixie Sullivan, wearing a belt Hendrix gave her; manager Mike Jeffery and wife Gillian on their wedding day, June 1965.

Barry Peake/Shutterstock, Daily Mirror/Mirrorpix, via Getty Images

"JIMI HENDRIX WILL NOT INVITE OR INCITE THE AUDIENCE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL TO REMOVE THEIR CLOTHING." LETTER FROM MIKE JEFFERY

To Lowlands Paradise festival in December 1968. An upgrade on Mike Jeffery's household contents insurance follows the purchase of a mink coat for the manager's actress wife, Gillian. Entertainingly, a copy of a letter from Jeffery to a promoter in February 1969 attests to entertainment establishment anxieties around Hendrix's influence on the youth: "This letter will serve as a written undertaking that Jimi Hendrix will not invite or incite the audience at the Royal Albert Hall to remove their clothing."

In the end, the Albert Hall shows were to be the last European outings for the original Experience line-up. But while the February 24 performance has been immortalised in footage rehoused in a 2019 movie release, less is said of the misfiring February 18 date, where Hendrix, drugged and sloppy, was pulled off stage before more damage to his reputation could be sustained. It was left to Sullivan to explain the situation to a packed Albert Hall.

"I said, Go and get your ticket refund at the door, and that was it," she tells MOJO today. "I was imposing in those days."

"TRIXIE WAS TOUGH AS NAILS," CONFIRMS EDDIE Kramer of the Jeffery archive's guardian angel. "She had to be, you know. But she was also a fabulous character, very cool. She was often the one who had to move cash around for Mike Jeffery. She'd get on flights to Spain or the Bahamas with cash stuffed in her bra, in her pants, in her boots…"

Sullivan, the daughter of an East End docker, told Hendrix biographer Philip Norman that she secured the job with Jeffery – who also owned a club in Mallorca – because she was the only applicant who knew where Mallorca was. In 1966, early in her tenure, her boss asked her to pop around to his flat in Jermyn Street to supervise the cleaners.

"One of the cleaners comes in and says, 'What do I do with this?'" she told Norman, "and it's a shotgun he's found under a chair. In fact, there's a gun under *every* chair. "

"Mike was a tough guy," underlines Sullivan today. "He didn't fuck around and he wasn't a guy to mess with. You took a great deal of care around Mike Jeffery."

Colourful stories about Jeffery abound. On National Service in Egypt, it was said that he commandeered a truck and loaded it with English newspapers in Cairo, selling them on to the troops at a profit. Threatened with a court martial, he cut his CO in on the deal. Later, he'd claim that, when seconded to Military Intelligence in Trieste, he'd aided in a defection operation and killed a border guard. A girlfriend, Jenny Clarke, said he kept a photo of the sentry's family he took from the body.

An intimidating reputation likely did Jeffery – a shark among sharks – no harm in the twilight world of clubs and bands, although it's hard to peel fact from fiction. One story has it that the manager, who favoured dark glasses wherever possible, once curried sympathy with the Krays, London's most feared crime family, by pretending to be blind. Sullivan hadn't heard that one but reckons, questionably, that the psychopathic Krays "wouldn't have messed with Mike."

Did the sharp practice, aura of menace, and criminal connections, benefit Jeffery's clients, or the opposite? For her part, Sullivan is still convinced that Jeffery did not rip off Hendrix, or at least, not much, and that relations between them remained cordial, even during the period in 1970 that some, including the reliable Eddie Kramer, claim that Hendrix was looking to sever ties. "Do you know what bullshit is?" she asks. "That's bullshit."

The most mysterious incident in the history between Hendrix and Jeffery – if one disregards the fantasy that Jeffery was in some way involved in the guitarist's fatal overdose – remains Hendrix's kidnapping near Central Park in Manhattan in September 1969. No-one likely to speak with first-hand experience of the imbroglio survives. Some, including Hendrix's brother Leon, have alleged the snatch was set up by Jeffery so he could play the white knight, free Hendrix and bind him closer. Trixie Sullivan, unsurprisingly, sees her old boss in a better light, recalling his horror when he took the ransom call. Her view of Jeffery's rescue mission is more straightforward.

"He may have given them the money," she shrugs. "He might have beaten them up. He might have killed them. I don't know and I don't want to know."

OF MIKE JEFFERY'S MORE UNCONVENTIONAL business practices and their bearing on Hendrix's career, his archive is understandably enigmatic. Threats and grifts would not have been put in black and white. However, there's ample insight into a concern on the frontier of respectability. The collection contains correspondence with Yameta, the offshore company set up by Jeffery in the Bahamas to keep earnings away from the prying eyes of taxmen and, perhaps, his bands. At the same time, every third piece of paper viewed by MOJO appears to be a letter from a creditor or their solicitors, complaining of non-payment of a bill.

"Oh, we never paid anything on time!" admits Sullivan. "It was total mayhem." But no more or less, she adds, than comparable businesses at the time.

When the bailiffs came for Jeffery's furniture, he'd long been operating between the States and Mallorca, with a house in Shokan, near Woodstock, although he was in Mallorca on September 18, 1970, with Sullivan, when he heard of Hendrix's death. "That's when the chaos started," notes Sullivan.

Jeffery's own demise was hardly less bizarre. On March 5, 1973 he boarded an Iberian Airlines DC-9 from Palma, Mallorca bound for London, but never arrived. French air traffic controllers were on strike and their roles covered by military personnel. Jeffery's plane was clipped by another aircraft, broke up in mid air and crashed outside Nantes. All on board perished. "He never liked flying," says Trixie Sullivan.

It's difficult, in retrospect, not to see Hendrix and Jeffery's paths as grimly entwined. Without Jeffrey and his partner Chas Chandler, would Hendrix's potential have been unlocked? At the same time, a more enlightened style of rock management – one for which there were few models at the time – would surely have benefited one of music's great visionary geniuses. If she remembers Jeffery fondly, Sullivan – whose involvement in Hendrix's life and work is evident throughout the archive she's preserved – remembers Jimi more fondly still.

"He was a good guy," she says. "Very shy. Gentle. They all thought I was having an affair with him but I wasn't. I wasn't interested in any of the bands. They were cocky little sods most of them. I was like the big sister clipping them round the ears. Jimi – he was different. He had no idea how good he was."

Special thanks to Pete Sheppard. Items from Trixie Sullivan's archive will be sold in November by The Propstore London & LA. Enquire via petesheppard@hotmail.com.

Gunter Zint/K & K Ulf Krugher OHG/Getty, Mirrorpix (2)

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JIM MARSHALL (Products) Ltd.
2957

TELEGRAM
TS 708
TA58200 CDC173 NEWYORK NY 35 27 1236PCVIA WUID=
TRIXIE SULLIVAN 30 MAIDA VALE FLAT 5 LONDONW9=
INJURY TO JIMI HENDRIX LEG WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO
TRAVEL AS PER DOCTORS INSTRUCTION AWAITING XRAY
RESULTS WILL FORWARD LATEST MEDICAL INFORMATION
LATER TODAY = BOB LEVINE

Daily Mirror
EUROPE'S BIGGEST DAILY SALE
Day of protest
AIR CRASH FURY
BEA stop flights to France after jet collision kills 68
Hunt for maniac after Mandy, 5, is murdered

Rough Demo Take
Up From the Skies
Hark the Bell Ring
Little Miss Lover

KAHALA HILTON HOTEL
5000 Kahala Avenue
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815
A luxurious resort hotel, edging a white ocean beach and set in secluded tropical gardens . . . just a few minutes from bustling Waikiki.

HONOLULU, HI PM 11 JUL 1970
45
SPECIAL DELIVERY
POST CARD

My Love,
I had 5 days before I go record again so I come to Hawaii for those day to get sun Love you miss you see you soon
Jimmy

Trixie Sullivan
No. 12 Calle 309
Bona Nova,
Palma De Mallorca

Daily Mirror
'Keep out' call as Nixon's ships
JORDAN
U.S. WARNE
BY RUSSIAN
NEXT WEEK'S MIRROR
BOBBY MOORE TALKING
THE REAL LULU
Wild man of pop Jimi Hendrix is dead
'DRUG COMA' RIDDLE

12th February, 1969

Mr. J. Higgins,
Harold Davison Organisation,
Regent House,
235/240 Regent Street,
London, W.1.

Dear Mr. Higgins,

With reference to our telephone conversation of today concerning a letter received by you from Mr. Munday, General Manager of the Albert Hall, this letter will serve as a written undertaking that Jimi Hendrix will not invite or incite the audience at the Royal Albert Hall to remove their clothing.

I would point out however that an article which appeared in the Sunday Mirror, which I understand instigated the letter from the Albert Hall, misquoted very badly indeed a statement made by Jimi Hendrix during an interview. He was in fact referring to a peaceful demonstration he believed would be more effective than riots outside the American Embassey, to take place in Hyde Park. This statement had nothing whatsoever to do with any concert featuring himself.

I am sorry that the article should have caused so much misunderstanding and trust this letter will serve the purpose of stilling the fears expressed by the Albert Hall.

Yours faithfully,

D.D. Michael Jeffery
Manager Jimi Hendrix Experience

Changing the subject slightly, Jimi is happy at the moment and in fact has not been out once since his return from America, except to go shopping. He arrived and instead of going to the hotel he went to the flat as he says "to pick up some clothes" but I think he wanted to see how the land was lying. It seems that Cathy cooked a meal for him, and I know she cleaned the flat so thoroughly just before he arrived, that he decided to stay. Cathy says he goes to bed at 11.30 and gets up every morning at 10.30 and looks better than he has ever done. He's buying new curtains and carpet for the flat and domestication seems to suit him for the moment. You never know how longit will last. Anyway, the general relations between the boys and Jimi seem much better.

Learning Experience: (anti-clockwise from above): news of Mike Jeffery's plane crash, March 1973; from Trixie's archive – telegram re: Jimi's Utrecht no-show; receipt for one of Jimi's Marshall amps; working versions of tracks for *Axis: Bold As Love*; postcard from Jimi to Trixie and one of Jimi's Hawaii snaps; Mike Jeffery reassures the Royal Albert Hall; Trixie's Jimi belt today; (from left) Mitch Mitchell, Noel Redding, plus David Lutton and Ernie Graham from Eire Apparent, and Trixie, taken by Hendrix in LA; Trixie fills Mike Jeffery in. Finally: news of Hendrix's death, September 1970. Centre: the Experience in their prime, 1967.

MOJO PRESENTS

With immaculate harmonies and ’70s hair, and fans including Weyes Blood and Todd Rundgren, THE LEMON TWIGS are throwbacks to a golden age of pop sophistication. They also do mid-air splits that make Paul Simon gasp. Is it time for them to seal the deal? “We’re aiming for something timeless,” they tell JAMES McNAIR.

Photography by **EVA CHAMBERS**

Eva Chambers

IN 2021, FIVE YEARS AND THREE ALBUMS INTO A PRECOCIOUS CAREER PURVEYING MULTI-coloured pop for connoisseurs, Long Island sibling duo The Lemon Twigs hit a wall. Despite abundant critical plaudits for their previous work, record labels were not exactly queuing up to release their latest batch of songs.

“We had to shop for a new deal and a few companies who’d previously expressed an interest in us rejected the album outright,” elder brother Brian D’Addario tells MOJO. “Well, *one* of them quite liked it, but they wanted an outside producer to modernise our sound,” he adds, eyebrows raised. “Probably the worst thing we could do…”

Beloved of Todd Rundgren, Colin Blunstone and Big Star’s Jody Stephens – all of whom they have backed in a live capacity – the D’Addario brothers’ reputation is based on a curatorial fascination for the sounds (and the haircuts, and the trousers) of a golden pop-rock past. Signing to 4AD as teenagers, their advanced-level vocal harmonies spoke of their immersion in the canon, while childhoods spent acting on TV, in film and theatre translated into presence on-stage, where they swap vocals, guitar and drum duties, younger brother Michael stealing the show with spectacular high kicks and mid-air splits.

Set on their path by 2016 album *Do Hollywood*, produced by Foxygen’s Jonathan Rado, the pair were soon also in demand as session players. Hired by Rado for Natalie Mering’s breakthrough Weyes Blood LP *Titanic Rising*, in 2019, the brothers added various instruments and backing vocals. Brian even wrote the striking string part for the album’s swooning opener, A Lot’s Gonna Change.

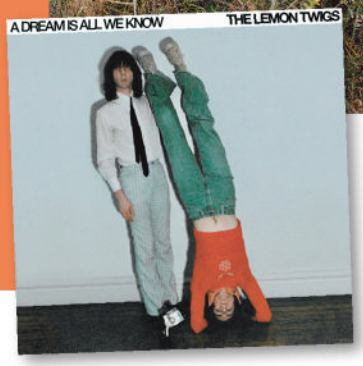
“My first impressions?” ponders Mering. “That Brian was the sweet, steady one and Michael was the crazy rock’n’roll guy. I’d met them in Germany around *Do Hollywood*, and I was impressed talking to Michael about ➢

Flower power: The Lemon Twigs' Michael (left) and Brian D'Addario continue to chase the dream.

Branching out: Brian (left) and Michael take to the hills, 2024; (left) 2015 cassette-only debut *What We Know*; collaborator Weyes Blood's *Titanic Rising* (2019); (below) new LP *A Dream Is All We Know*.

"OUR FAVOURITE POP RECORDS HAD A LOT OF CARE PUT INTO THEM. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE CHASING."

Brian D'Addario



Stephanie Pia

≺ Lou Reed. I thought, Wow – the next generation's going to be OK!"

Everything turned out OK for that stalled fourth album, too. Finding a home at the Captured Tracks label, *Everything Harmony* was released last year to widespread acclaim, adding ornate chamber pop production to solid songcraft and restoring faith among critics who'd lost touch with the band. A new album, *A Dream Is All We Know*, follows hot on its heels on May 3.

Now a ripe old 27 (Brian) and 25 (Michael), The Lemon Twigs have stared into the abyss. Today they talk of how quickly time passes and the opportunities that need to be grasped. It's the theme of the lead track from the new album, Michael's Byrds-go-Beach Boys doozie, My Golden Years. "It's expressing my anxiety about us not achieving what we're capable of," he says. But it's not the only song speaking to The Lemon Twigs' renewed intent and focus.

"The album's aiming for something timeless," says Michael.

"It's deliberately pleasing in a more conscious way," adds Brian. "Our favourite pop records had a lot of care put into them, The Beach Boys being the absolute pinnacle of that. That's what we're chasing."

LOOKING THROUGH HIS 'PROUD DAD' LENS, RONNIE D'Addario offers MOJO several snapshots of his sons' musical precocity. Here's Brian aged five, playing the Mellotron intro to Strawberry Fields. And here's Michael singing his childhood composition The Cool Side Of The Pillow. "As a kid Mike's voice had this great sandy quality," says Ronnie, "but for a while he was only interested in drums."

While dad – a moderately successful songwriter who played with The Clancy Brothers' Thomas Makem and had a tune covered by The Carpenters – trained the boys' ears by flagging augmented and diminished chords in Beatles songs, Brian and Michael's mother Susan – an Ohio-born stage musical fan who'd moved to NYC for auditions – enrolled them in a Bethpage, Long Island theatre school.

Pretty soon, an agent proffered Mr and Mrs D'Addario his card. Brian went on to act in the Broadway version of The Little Mermaid ("He sings on the original-cast soundtrack," beams Ronnie), and Michael hit Broadway, too, in Arthur Miller's three-act tragedy, All My Sons.

Aged 16 and 14, the D'Addarios made just 100 copies of a cassette-only album, *What We Know*, a Flaming Lips-esque thing aspiring to Dave Fridmann's production aesthetic. "We're still flaming," smiles Michael, "but we're more Flamin' Groovies now. That very dense psych sound was something we dropped pretty fast."

Rocking androgynous thrift-store chic, The Lemon Twigs followed *Do Hollywood* with 2018's *Go To School*, a concept album about a chimp named Shane who gets an education. The strength of that album's Small Victories and Never In My Arms, Always In My Heart spoke of a duo who, musically at least, were fully formed. But many found the concept off-putting and sat that LP out.

"Oh, I'm ashamed of it!" laughs Michael of *Go To School* now. "I was still growing up and trying out different voices. It was a bit like dressing like Jimi Hendrix, looking in the mirror and thinking, Hmm. That isn't really me."

But The Lemon Twigs didn't learn their lesson straight away. In 2019, when the developers of Owl Moon, an online TV show about a fictional band, asked the brothers to star in the series and write music for it, they quickly got into character.

"Thing was, we were going through a bit of a Kiss phase," confesses Brian, "so we ended up writing stuff like Nothin' To Lose, even though Owl Moon were supposed to be a '60s band from Southern California."

"Yeah, that show was kind of doomed to failure," confirms Michael. "We didn't know if people would think it was funny, like we did, or whether it might ruin our reputation. It was probably for the best that it got canned."

Subsequently, their 2020 album, *Songs For The General Public*, grew out of a period of brotherly discord.

"Michael was getting heavily into Lou Reed and that street punk vibe, and we argued a lot about direction," says Brian.

Band of brothers: (clockwise from left) Michael takes to the air, Austin, Texas, 2017; Michael channels Lou Reed, 2019; Brian Twigs out, 2017; "More cymbal?" Michael and Brian in the studio, 2023; the Twig gang (from left) Todd Rundgren, Brian, Danny Ayala, Michael and Megan Zeankowski, Coachella, '17.

TAKE A BOUGH

The Lemon Twigs' growth, in albums, by **James McNair**.

DO HOLLYWOOD

★★★★

(4AD, 2016)

A lucky bag of shamelessly theatrical pop recorded in Jonathan Rado's front room, *Do Hollywood* fizzes with fresh-faced brio. Vivid as an episode of H.R. Pufnstuf, it taps doo wop, Big Star guitars, Supertramp keys and harpsichord, the Twigs doing the show 'right here'. Self-consciousness had yet to impinge.

GO TO SCHOOL

★★★

(4AD, 2018)

"I like a straightforward idea with concept albums," says Brian, and *GTS*'s rock musical about a chimp raised as a human is exactly that, for better or for worse. Todd Rundgren duets with the D'Addarios' mother Susan on Rock Dreams, while The Lesson and Wonderin' Ways betray songwriting influences old as vaudeville.

SONGS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

★★★★

(4AD, 2020)

With tension in the ranks over direction, the D'Addarios' third was a push and pull between Michael's sleazy, New York street symphonies (Hell On Wheels; Hog) and Brian's breezy powerpop (The One). Also their proggiest, most experimental LP in places, as demonstrated by the Zappa-esque Only A Fool.

EVERYTHING HARMONY

★★★★

(Captured Tracks, 2023)

A ballad-heavy, often acoustic re-dedication to craft coloured by bereavement, family illness and between-record deals alienation, *EH* exudes what the brothers called "a palpable mood of defeat", but beautifully. Vibraphone, euphonium and French horn bring colour; I Don't Belong To Me conjures The Carpenters at their most desolately sad.

"Yeah, that's true," agrees Michael, "but we've never had actual warfare like Oasis or The Kinks, because we don't have set roles, and the balance of power changes with every song. I was thinking about one-off performances – the way Lou Reed or Iggy Pop do things – and Brian's approach, making everything in the arrangement communicate with everything else, seemed a bit OCD. What can I say? I was still really young. Now I really see the value in that for our music."

While the D'Addarios' journey on record may have bemused a few would-be fans, on-stage the pair were as scintillating as ever. Mering remembers watching them play Outside Lands festival in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Another interested observer was one Paul Simon.

"Michael jumped over his drum kit and did the splits six feet up in the air," Mering recalls. "Paul Simon saw it from backstage and he was like (*awestruck*) 'Who is *that*?!' I thought, If only you knew, Paul…"

IN RECENT YEARS FAMILY HURTS AND losses have impacted upon the D'Addarios' output. Uncle John, their mother's brother, had Down's Syndrome and lived with them for a few years. Brian talks movingly about the brothers' closeness to John, and about how his passing marked their first experience of death. One of their grandmothers passed away soon after that having developed Alzheimer's, and the experience found its way into Brian's *Everything Harmony* song New To Me.

"You almost forget who they were and try to go along with their new way of perceiving the world, to make it easier for them," says Brian. "But in New To Me, the person knows they are going to get Alzheimer's, so they're saying to their loved one, 'Don't try to make me recognise you, and we can fall in love all over again.' It's an overly romanticised take on a very troubling thing, but it was my way of dealing with it."

Meanwhile, *A Dream Is All We Know*'s soaring bossa nova Ember Days was inspired by The Tibetan Book Of The Dead, and Sweet Vibration, too, finds Brian "trying to reach some kind of equilibrium with the universe, if that doesn't sound too pretentious. With everything that's going on in the world right now it's difficult to know where you fit in. Most people I know feel that heaviness."

Both home and away, the Twigs remain busy. They have respective solo records on the back burner. *Gifts* – "a goofy Fifth Dimension/Jimmy Webb-style" collaboration with Sean Lennon – will be a flexi-disc giveaway with the new album, plus they've almost finished an LP of Ronnie D'Addario songs featuring Mac DeMarco, Todd Rundgren, Beach Boy Al Jardine's son Matt and more.

Rundgren – he does a great Borat impression, says Michael – first fell for the Twigs after they backed him for a performance of his 1972 single Couldn't I Just Tell You at Coachella in 2017. Does the elder statesman of pop sophistication see them as keepers of the flame?

"Maybe," says Michael. "I suppose it was a bit like when Teenage Fanclub backed Alex Chilton – your heroes love it when you're a young band and you can just nail it."

Natalie Mering, meanwhile, has her own take on the Twigs' worth. "There's hidden depths there," she says, "because their choices are much more radical than most people realise. The Lemon Twigs aren't your typical hipsters. They're trying to create great songs in a world where people assume all the great songs have already been written, and that's pretty brave."

Getty (4), Eva Chambers

THE GLITTER TWINS

DAVID BOWIE and MICK RONSON were one of the great double acts: scintillating and simpatico, taboo-smashing in ways 'Ronno' was not always comfortable with. In her new memoir, Bowie's Ziggy-era stylist – and later, Ronson's wife – gives the inside track on their rise, fall, reunion, and the untimely end of one of rock's superlative talents. "My God, those two together," marvels SUZI RONSON.

Words: MARK PAYTRESS.

Photography: MICK ROCK.

ONE SATURDAY, IN EARLY SUMMER 1971, heads turned in the busy Evelyn Paget hair salon on Beckenham High Street.

"Look at that!" said a stylist named Doris. "Whatever's next…"

Passing by the window was a tall, slim man with chest-length wavy blond hair. While he, David Bowie, pushed the pram, wife Angie strutted in black jeans and a furry jacket, her hair blonde and boyish. For the main attraction, David Bowie was wearing a flowing dull-gold midi dress, complemented by a floppy hat and knee-length boots.

Suzi Fussey, a trained stylist at the salon, knew that Bowie was a local 'name', that he'd played regularly at The Three Tuns just down the high street, and that he was a one-hit wonder. As Suzi Ronson, she would become a crucial figure in Bowie lore, but for now she was the favoured hairdresser of the singer's mother, one Mrs Peggy Jones from nearby Bromley.

Courtesy Suzi Ronson/Faber, © Mick Rock

"David's mum was quiet, but not haughty," says Ronson of the middle-aged lady in the tweed skirt, cardigan and sensible shoes. "She would have a shampoo and set. Sometimes she'd have a trim. And occasionally she'd have a chocolate kiss rinse."

That winter, encouraged by Angie, who'd visited the salon, Fussey was in the Bowies' communal-style residence, Haddon Hall, creating a hairstyle for Mrs Jones's son that would

Moonage daytrippers: David Bowie and Mick Ronson on the train to Aberdeen for the first gig of Bowie's final Ziggy tour, May 15, 1973; (left) Suzi Ronson, 1965.

change her world, Bowie's world and the wider world of popular culture. What soon became known as 'the Ziggy Cut' would bring an element of deviant dandyism back into pop. Today, it remains one of the most potent symbols of 20th century youth rebellion.

"No one had short hair then, let alone short hair like that, spiked and dyed brilliant red," Ronson tells MOJO today. "No man dyed his hair unless it was some old fart trying to touch up his grey. Marc Bolan was the star before David came along and he had those long black curls. David's hair really shocked people."

Working wonders with a pair of scissors and some hair stiffener gave Suzi an entrée into Bowie's world. As Bowie's new stylist, she became a regular at Haddon Hall.

"It's only three miles from home, but I might as well be in a foreign land," she writes in her breezy new memoir, Me And Mr Jones. This grand, decaying residence provided a blank canvas for all kinds of experimentation. One minute, Bowie would be French kissing his clothes designer pal Freddi Buretti, the next Angie was telling her about her fling with T. Rex's Mickey Finn. "Oh, it's OK," said Mrs Bowie. "David knows all about Mickey. He encourages me!"

Soon, Suzi was taking a tentative step into bohemia, ➢

discovering for herself that the building's number one resident was "a tender, romantic lover". Angie, it appears, didn't mind at all.

"David and Angie were outrageous, creative, vibrant people," says Suzi today. "They were living life. It made everything else look so grey and dull."

ONE EVENING EARLY IN 1972, FUSSEY ARRIVED AT Haddon Hall just as Bowie and guitarist Mick Ronson were performing a new song, Starman. "When the song ends, Angie screams and we break into applause," she writes. "David and Mick sit in silence smiling at each other. Angie is sure it'll be a big hit when it's released."

Soon Fussey was helping Angie with costumes and extending her tonsorial revolution to Bowie's band. She declares bassist Trevor Bolder's extraordinary concoction – a two-tiered spiked top with long layers dyed blue-black – "a fantastic haircut" and clearly remembers Mick Ronson's scepticism when he first saw Bowie's new barnet. "It's not for everyone," he commented drily.

On-stage, she notes, Mick Ronson was full of confidence; off it, he was shy and made the tea. Suzi found him attractive. She also realised that despite their musical chemistry, Bowie and Ronson were in some ways poles apart. "Mick was very 'Yorkshire'," she says. "Anything that smacked of artsy-fartsy he wasn't really interested in."

Nevertheless, 'Ronno' believed in the new Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars as much as Bowie did. He'd contributed plenty to Bowie's musical growth and confidence as a frontman. Suzi cites the transformation of Moonage Daydream as evidence of the Ronson effect. "It was a country or folk-ish song to start with. But when Mick got hold of it, it turned into something else completely."

But unlike, say, Jagger/Richards or Lennon/McCartney, it was incumbent on early-'70s superstars to be seen as the font of all creativity. In the presentation, at least, the Bowie/Ronson relationship came over as one of Master and Apprentice.

"Well, which one would be the Master?" says Suzi. "It really was a two-way street. Mick had all the technical ability you could possibly want from a musician. But he hadn't met anyone with great songs until he met David. David wasn't singing about some bloke picking up a girl in a pub; he wrote about interesting things. He was great with melodies. And let's not forget, David was a folk musician before he met Mick."

By July 1972, around the time Suzi was finally put on Bowie's MainMan management payroll at £20 per week, Starman had charted, supported by an eye-popping Top Of The Pops appearance, *Ziggy Stardust* was the most talked-about album of the summer and gigs were being reviewed with A Star Is Born headlines. Bowie's handler Tony Defries started talking up the singer as Elvis Presley's "heir apparent". Six months earlier, back in Haddon Hall, Suzi had overheard Bowie say, "I'd sell my soul to be famous." Now that goal was in touching distance.

Yet one incident, now engraved in Spiders legend, all but ended the group upon lift-off. While history records Mick Rock's Bowie/Ronson on-stage 'fellatio' photo as era-defining in terms of its homoerotic implications, Suzi, dancing side-stage, aimed one of those "What in the world?" laughs at Bowie's minder Stuey George.

But when the photo appeared as a full-page ad in the following week's Melody Maker, Ronno threatened to quit. "People forget," she says, "that being gay was illegal just a few years earlier. Mick's mum and dad were horrified at David's 'I'm Gay' publicity."

Bowie was persuasive – and despite his misgivings Ronno knew he had to stay. Suzi, now harbouring a serious crush on the guitarist, was relieved. The tactile and be-costumed Bowie/Ronson double act would set the tone for the nascent Glam era. "My God," she says. "Those two together…"

But their differences weren't going away.

"David was always going to make it. He was the most determined person I'd ever met," Suzi continues. "Mick had a different kind of ambition. Yes, he wanted to make it in music. And David had given him the opportunity to go into the studio and do what he wanted. But did Mick think of himself as a massive star? I don't think he cared much about that. Trying to get him to pose was like pulling teeth! David had all that down. But Mick would just sit there with a fag in his hand."

"David was always going to make it. He was the most determined person I'd ever met. Mick had a different kind of ambition."
Suzi Ronson

IT WASN'T ALL GLAMOUR IN Bowie's inner circle. Costumes required regular repairs and pressing. Sometimes Suzi would reinforce underarms by hand. Once, she found herself back at her family home dyeing a beige jockstrap red on her mother's stove. There were those zips, forever malfunctioning thanks to a combination of sweat and dry-cleaning. Then America beckoned.

Looking around at the Carnegie Hall crowd at Bowie's New York date on his first US tour in September '72, Suzi exclaimed: "My haircut is everywhere!" The visitors witnessed another side of the city when a woman blithely took a shit in the street as the tour bus pulled up outside the Plaza Hotel.

There were rumblings within the Bowie camp too. David and Angie argued about his wish that she return to Britain to look after the PR drive at home. The day after Carnegie Hall, Angie left. It marked the moment, Suzi says, when "the roles Angie used to play had been taken over by professionals."

With the 'tour mother' absent, Bowie became even more sexually voracious. It was Suzi's job to invite the keener looking young women in the front rows backstage to meet David and the band. She was less impressed when notorious LA groupies Sable Starr and Lori Lightning made a beeline for Bowie.

In February 1973, the band were back in the States for a shorter, one-month tour. The stage-bed-stage routine was taking its toll, while the cocaine that helped sustain the high was having adverse effects. At the Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles at the end of the tour, Suzi writes, "David is different these days. I miss him and the way it used to be."

In Japan that April, 15 months into the never-ending Ziggy tour, Suzi found herself privy to a meeting between Bowie, Defries and Mick Ronson that would change all their lives. They're discussing the break-up of the band and launching Mick as a solo artist. Tony does most of the talking. Suzi is sworn to secrecy, but the spectre of imminent collapse haunts her until the retirement show at Hammersmith in July.

"I think David wanted it," Suzi says today. "But I'm not sure the publicly stated reasons are the real reasons. We'd just done this tour in America, which the English papers reported as the coming of the

© Mick Rock, Getty. Courtesy Suzi Ronson/Faber

But boy, could he play guitar: (clockwise from left) Ronson and Bowie performing 'fellatio', Oxford Town Hall, June 1972; Mick and Suzi cuddle up, 1977; Bowie and wife Angie take three-week old Zowie (AKA Duncan) for a stroll, June 29, 1971.

new Messiah, but it wasn't all like that in America. We were popular in Detroit and Philadelphia, but no one cared about him in Kansas or the Bible Belt.

"When you're planning a career, you take it up and up. So, in David's mind, the next tour was going to have to be completely different and I don't think he was sure he was going to be able to do that, whether with the band or not. And David was exhausted."

MICK RONSON DIDN'T GIVE MUCH AWAY THAT DAY, Suzi remembers. But once they'd become a couple that autumn, during a break in Rome with Bowie after recording *Pin Ups* (Suzi styled Bowie's hair for the cover shoot), she began to understand the private Ronno.

"When he gets a guitar in his hands," she reflects, "his face changes, and he looks a bit like an evil little doll." But away from the spotlight, she began to see Mick's vulnerabilities.

"After years of hard work, it had got so easy for Mick that he thought everyone could do what he did. That's why he was nervous about rocking the boat, because he hated the idea of going back to Hull and working at the BP factory with his dad. He was doing what he loved to do."

Suzi was at the Château D'Hérouville for sessions for Mick's first solo LP, *Slaughter On 10th Avenue*. The band were under-rehearsed, Bowie's promised assistance was slow in coming, and the album release was delayed for months. Defries and Bowie's plan for Ronno to become MainMan's new big star was backed up by a massive publicity campaign, and the presence of the London Symphony Orchestra at Ronson's coming out gigs at London's Rainbow in February 1974. Critics were dubious about the guitarist's front-man capabilities. And while sales for the LP were good, the sequencing ➢

A cut above: Suzi Ronson with David Bowie, 1973.

A BRUSH WITH FAME

In this extract from Me And Mr Jones, SUZI RONSON recalls her first steps inside Bowie's Haddon Hall *demi-monde*. The plan was to give Angie a perm, but the outcome was The Haircut That Changed The World...

HADDON HALL is one of those mansions that families used to live in during the olden days. David and Angie live on the ground floor. I knock at the oak front door and Angie answers. She doesn't seem to recognise me. I'm not sure what to say but as I turn to leave, she smiles and invites me in for tea.

I follow her into a massive hall and look up at the tall stained-glass windows that provide a backdrop for a sweeping, Hollywood-style staircase leading from the ground floor to the minstrels' gallery. I feel as if I'm in a church.

David sits in the bay window, flicking through a magazine. His guitar rests on a stand close by and there is some sound equipment and a cassette tape recorder on the floor. He's wearing a soft velvet shirt with rolled-up sleeves and fitted trousers. His skin is as white as Angie's, his face finely boned. Long blond hair spills over his shoulders, casting shadows over his face and eyes. He greets me, and without further ado he nods to Angie and they both leave the room. They don't return for what feels like an eternity, but it's very possibly only 20 minutes; I find out later that this is something they do quite regularly to their guests, to see who will stay and who will go.

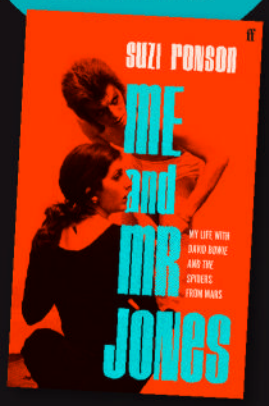
ANGIE BEGINS by apologising and saying she's changed her mind about the perm. I'm relieved; I'm not sure a perm would look so great on her anyway. We chat about style, fashion and music – well, they do, while I listen and agree with everything they say.

The truth is that I'm in the dark. I haven't heard of anyone David is talking about, Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground, Iggy Pop. I'm trying to think of something interesting to say, so when he mentions Marc Bolan, I'm delighted – I've heard of Marc Bolan – and I jump right in.

"Oh yes, I saw him on Top Of The Pops," I start happily. "I love the way he looks."

It was true. On Top Of The Pops, Marc wore a top hat, satin trousers and a feather boa around his neck, with glitter on his cheeks; he smiled and flirted with the camera and the audience. No one looks, acts or sounds like Bolan. When I finish my fan-like accolade, though, David doesn't respond. The atmosphere shifts and he changes the subject. I thought I was on common ground here and I'm not sure what's gone wrong. I didn't know then that Marc and David went to each other's gigs. Although they seemed friendly, they were also fierce competitors. David is quiet as he sits and flips through the magazines on the floor.

> "Any doubts David might have had disappear the second he looks in the mirror at his short spiky red hair. He looks amazing."



Angie is taken with the idea of how wonderful he would look with short hair. She says it again and when she gets no reaction from him, she throws it over to me.

"What do you think, Suzi?"

"Well, no one has short hair." I think of Donovan, the Stones, The Who: they all have long, flowing locks. The Beatles might have started long hair for men, but the hippies took it to a different level. David would be the first to break that trend. "It would look really different," I go on. "It might look really good." It would certainly be new. David gets up and comes over to show me a photograph in a magazine of a model with a red spiky hairdo. "Can you do that?" he asks.

I look more closely at the photo. The girl looks incredible; her style is credited to someone called Kansai Yamamoto, a designer from Japan. It's a woman's hairstyle! I say yes instantly and try to keep the surprise from my face. As crazy as it is, I think David's the perfect person to pull this off. He's tall and thin, with high cheekbones and translucent white skin, his neck long and slim, his body almost feminine. We start immediately, clearing a space and laying down newspaper. It takes me about half an hour to chop off his long blond hair, and as it falls round my feet I am cautiously optimistic. The feeling's short-lived though, as when I finish, his hair won't stand up – it just flops to one side.

I'm panicking and David doesn't look too bright, so I say with a confidence I don't feel, "Don't worry, Dave, as soon as we tint it, the texture will change, and it will stand up."

I'm praying I'm right.

THE NEXT DAY, I experiment with colour at the salon and find the right one immediately. It's from the Fantasy range by Schwarzkopf: Red Hot Red. I try it with both 20- and 30-volume peroxide and, as I thought, the 30 volume lifts the colour up and makes it very bright. Now all I have to worry about is how to make it stand up. There are soft setting lotions at the salon, but they won't do. I need something stronger. I remember using a product called GARD before, an anti-dandruff treatment from Germany. It doesn't just cure dandruff – it sets hair like stone.

Angie calls me at the salon a few days later and says in a bright but slightly strained voice that David isn't happy; she asks when I'll be back.

"Tonight," I say, and with hair dye and confidence I go back to Haddon Hall.

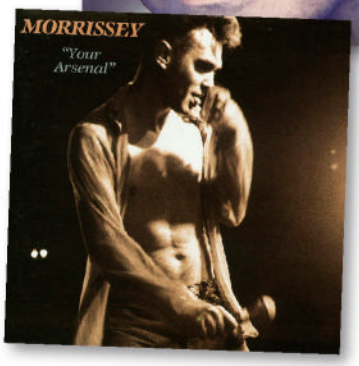
David greets me in silence. His hair looks like a schoolboy's haircut. I timidly hold out the swatches of bright-red hair that I did the experiment on: "Look, David, it's just like the photo." He looks marginally more interested but is still quiet. I apply the colour, and David still doesn't say a word as we wait for it to take. Lucky for me Angie is here, chatting away as usual, though I'm not listening – I'm too nervous to listen. When it's time, I wash it off and the tint runs like blood down the sink. I do a little dance inside: it's a brilliant red. If the GARD works like I remember, I'll be home and dry.

I pour a liberal amount into my hands and spread it into his hair. I start to dry it and as I do, I pull it up and away from his head. To my delight and relief, I feel the texture change in my hands. Any doubts David might have had disappear the second he looks in the mirror at his short spiky red hair. He looks amazing. It's standing up like a brush on his head. I start to smile as Angie screams and David dances round the room, posing, shaking his head, loving it. Angie says "numma numma" and purrs into his ear, then laughs up at him. "You look amazing, and... taller," she says. He looks at himself in the mirror again and again, running his fingers through his hair, and then, with a final laugh, he walks out the door, calling over his shoulder to Angie: "Let's go up to the Sombrero..."

Extracted from Me And Mr Jones: My Life With David Bowie And The Spiders From Mars by Suzi Ronson, published by Faber & Faber on April 4. RRP: £20.

Back down to earth: Mick Ronson's post-Spiders years with (clockwise from left) Ian Hunter at Air Studios, Oxford Street, London, 1974; soloing on-stage at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert, Wembley Stadium, April 20, 1992; on Dylan's Rolling Thunder Review, Toronto, December 2, 1975.

"Mick was only 46. He had so much more to give, doing the things he was so good at."
Suzi Ronson



© Mick Rock, Getty (3)

✓ did Ronno no favours at all. Why kick off with a cover of Elvis's Love Me Tender when Ronno's own Only After Dark would have ignited the set in his razor-sharp style?

After a second album, *Play Don't Worry*, Ronson – still bossed by Defries – found himself another superstar to play with, becoming part of Bob Dylan's 1975/76 Rolling Thunder Revue tour. It was short-lived, unlike his more productive association with Mott The Hoople's Ian Hunter, a personal and professional friendship until the end. "Mick was one of the best sidemen ever," Hunter told me in 2013, "but he wasn't a frontman."

The solo career had been a mistake, Suzi acknowledges. "He wasn't ready to get thrown in there. It's unfortunate that Mick didn't have the sense to say, 'No, I'm not doing that, I'd rather do this.' But he was as exhausted as David was. He needed to take some time off, relax and figure out what he was going to do next."

In summer 1992, after joining Bowie on-stage at April's Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert, Mick was invited by Bowie to play guitar on *Black Tie White Noise*. On the album, they revisited Cream's I Feel Free, a song they'd last played during the early days of the Ziggy tour. Though already diagnosed with liver cancer, Ronno wasn't going to let serious illness get in the way of his music.

"Mick was really unwell that day," says Suzi. "He was in a lot of pain, but he really wanted to do it. David was very nice, very sweet to him. But it did cross my mind that it might be Mick's last ever recorded guitar solo."

For all Mick Ronson's pin-up looks and innovative guitar playing, Suzi insists his real strengths were as an arranger and producer. "It would've been a lot better if they'd given him a couple of productions and let him find his own way. And it breaks my heart. I wish I could've said to him, Don't do the solo thing."

In 1992, while Bowie was wooing him with letters, Mick was arranging and producing *Your Arsenal* for Morrissey. On one song, I Know It's Gonna Happen Someday, Mick reprised the coda riff to Rock'n'Roll Suicide. When Morrissey pointed it out, Mick told him there'd be no comeback because he'd written the original.

"Mick wasn't sad or mad or bitter; he didn't know he was going to die," says Suzi Ronson. "Morrissey's record was one of his best-sellers. Mick was getting offers. He'd been taught a lesson, and he was over it. He was only 46. He had so much more to give, doing the things he was so good at. And he would've got credit and he would've got paid."

IN AUGUST 1972, BOWIE AND Ronson had taken Lou Reed into Trident Studios to co-produce *Transformer*, the successful solo album Reed deserved. Suzi was there "as kind of a gopher, really".

"Mick and David worked wonderfully together," she says. "David arranged the backing vocals and was smart enough to tell Mick to get one take and say, 'That's it.' Mick excelled at all the nuts'n'bolts stuff – making sure things were in tune, writing and arranging strings and playing piano. Mick was one of those people who was completely involved in whatever he was doing."

Nowhere is that more evident than on Reed's Perfect Day. Mick Ronson plays the simple, delicate piano part; his string section rises to a climactic finale. Both hit the song's sunshine melancholy perfectly. Reed, a hard man to please, later described Ronno's arrangement as exquisite.

After Ronson's death in April 1993, Morrissey spoke of his production genius, singling out his work on *Transformer* and his piano on Perfect Day. Suzi agrees.

"David and Mick would have worked together again, too, I'm sure of it."

Hip to the American ruse: the MC5 in 1970 (clockwise from bottom left) Fred 'Sonic' Smith, Michael Davis, Dennis Thompson, Wayne Kramer, Rob Tyner.

"IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO PLAY KICK OUT THE JAMS... YOU HAD TO LIVE IT"

Testing the limit of what a rock band could be, the late WAYNE KRAMER propelled the MC5 through revolt and reverse, and, after a dramatic personal redemption, tended their legacy with passion and commitment. Out of a lifetime of hard-learned lessons, had come rare wisdom. "Love, man, that makes all the difference," he told BOB MEHR.

Photograph by: STEPHEN PALEY

Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

The sound that abounds: MC5 at Mount Clemens, Michigan, 1969 (from left) Thompson, Kramer, Smith, Tyner; (opposite, clockwise from left) Wayne Kramer, definitely part of the solution, 1969; members of the MC5 and The Stooges, plus friends and associates, as both bands sign contracts with Elektra Records in Ann Arbor, MI, October 1968; Kramer and Iggy Pop on-stage at the Nokia Theatre, New York, May 1, 2009; a White Panther Party call to arms.

WHEN WAYNE KRAMER SLIPPED away quietly in early February, felled by pancreatic cancer at the age of 75, he'd lived many lives.

If you'd asked him, he might tell you he began his journey as an abandoned son. It was what fuelled him to become a rebel, a rocker, a revolutionary. He might confess that he'd lost his way too – been a junkie, a jailbird, a journeyman. And that, ultimately, he'd evolved into the role of activist, author, torch-bearer, and most importantly, a father himself.

Kramer was all that, as well as the co-founder, lead guitarist, and catalyst of Detroit rock legends the MC5. Though he prized the group's legacy – and tended to it carefully – Kramer's real triumphs weren't gold records or hit songs, but more human achievements: his survival, his personal reinventions, and the profound effect he had on the lives of the fellow convicts and addicts he strived to help.

"Wayne always believed in new beginnings," says Danny Fields, the music industry veteran who signed the MC5 to Elektra back in 1968. "He believed you could always start over. That if the pieces were fundamentally there, if the integrity was there, you could rearrange the blocks. And he did that so obviously in his own life."

"From the time I met him, over almost 60 years, he continued to grow and develop as a musician and a person," says former MC5 manager and mentor John Sinclair. "Wayne was just a beautiful cat."

Producer/musician Don Was, a friend and collaborator for 45 years, noted that you could learn everything about Kramer just by playing with him.

"When you jammed with Wayne, he listened," says Was. "He was supportive, he was interactive, he was conversational. He could groove like crazy, he was funky, and he could play these solos that wasn't just a guy throwing notes in your face. He was saying something, *he was telling a story*. It wasn't enough to *play* Kick Out The Jams… you had to live it. He felt an obligation to stay true to that as well. And he did, right up to the end."

All hail little brother: the young Wayne Stanley Kambes.

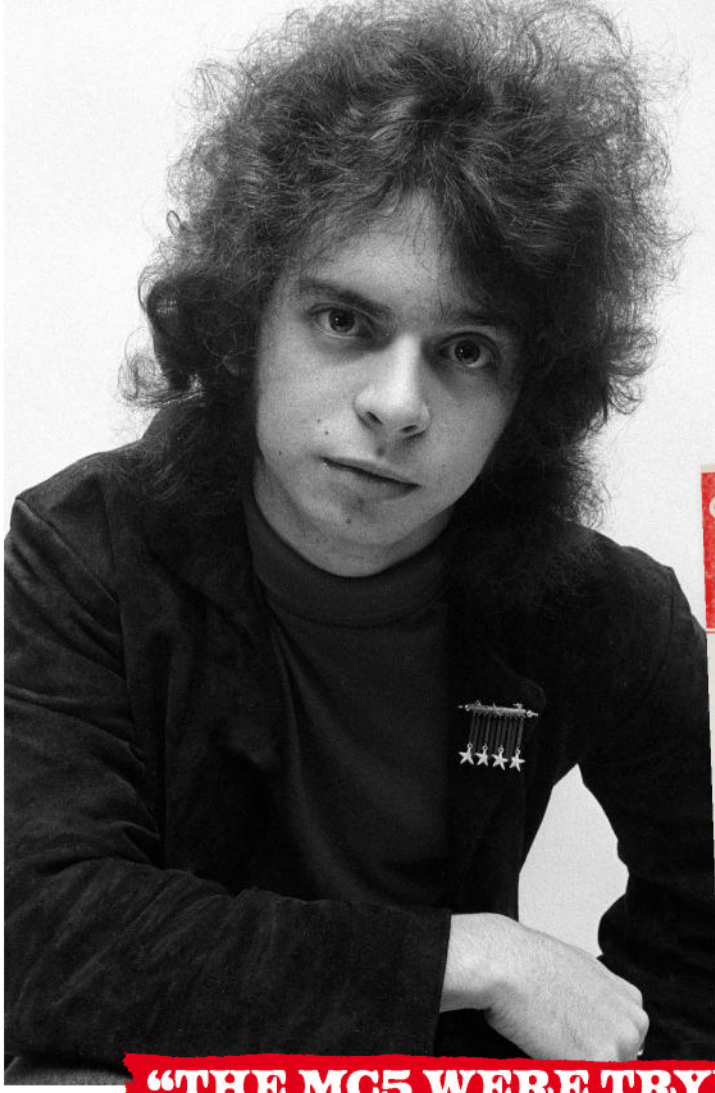
Leni Sinclair/Michael Ochs Archive/Getty Images, Courtesy Kramer family

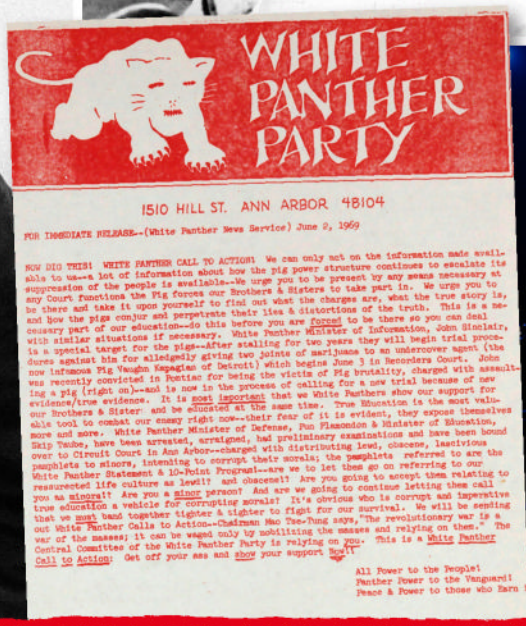
BORN WAYNE STANLEY KAMBES IN DETROIT IN April 1948, Kramer was marked from childhood by the psychic scars of his father, Stanley, who returned from the Second World War suffering severe PTSD, and fell into alcoholism. "He went through horrible shit, and nobody knew anything about how to treat people who had gone through those kinds of experiences," Kramer told me. "And he did what humans have always done – he medicated his damaged psyche."

His father would eventually abandon the family. "Not having a man in the picture left a big hole, developmentally, for me," said Kramer. "What drove me in music – the need to excel and to be in front of people and make them pay attention to me – was to try to fill that hole."

Between delinquent adolescent pursuits – "fighting and fucking," as he put it – the teenage Kramer picked up the guitar and formed some early bands, including the Bounty Hunters. But he found the ultimate inspiration in a screening of the 1964 concert film, T.A.M.I. Show, particularly the performances of James Brown and the young Rolling Stones. "It was like here's the roadmap. They're laying it all out for me," said Kramer. "This is everything I need to know to reach some level of fulfilment that I hadn't gotten to yet."

In 1965, Kramer and his childhood friend and fellow guitarist Fred Smith joined with singer Rob Tyner. Eventually adding bassist Michael Davis and drummer Dennis Thompson, the Motor City 5 were born. They were a typical Midwest garage outfit, with matching hairdos and suits, playing the covers of the day, but would quickly evolve, propelled by




WHITE PANTHER PARTY

1510 HILL ST. ANN ARBOR 48104

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--(White Panther News Service) June 2, 1969

NOW DIG THIS! WHITE PANTHER CALL TO ACTION! We can only act on the information made available to us--a lot of information about how the pig power structure continues to escalate its suppression of the people is available--We urge you to be present by any means necessary at any Court functions the Pig forces our Brothers & Sisters to take part in. We urge you to be there and take it upon yourself to find out what the charges are, what the true story is, and how the pigs conjur and perpetrate their ides & distortions of the truth. This is a necessary part of our education--do this before you are forced to be there so you can deal with similar situations if necessary. White Panther Minister of Information, John Sinclair, is a special target for the pigs--After stalling for two years they will begin trial procedures against him for allegedly giving two joints of marijuana to an undercover agent (the now infamous Pig Vaughn Kapagian of Detroit) which begins June 3 in Recorders Court. John was recently convicted in Pontiac for being the victim of Pig brutality, charged with assault ing a pig (right on)--and is now in the process of calling for a new trial because of new evidence/true evidence. It is most important that we White Panthers show our support for our Brothers & Sister and be educated at the same time. True Education is the most valuable tool to combat our enemy right now--their fear of it is evident, they expose themselves more and more. White Panther Minister of Defense, Pun Plamondon & Minister of Education, Skip Taube, have been arrested, arraigned, had preliminary examinations and have been bound over to Circuit Court in Ann Arbor--charged with distributing lewd, obscene, lascivious pamphlets to minors, intending to corrupt their morals; the pamphlets referred to are the White Panther Statement & 10-Point Program!--are we to let them go on referring to our ressurected life culture as lewd!? and obscene!? Are you going to accept them relating to you as minors!? Are you a minor person? And are we going to continue letting them call true education a vehicle for corrupting morals! It's obvious who is corrupt and imperative that we must band together tighter & tighter to fight for our survival. We will be sending out White Panther Calls to Action--Chairman Mao Tse-Tung says, "The revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them." The Central Committee of the White Panther Party is relying on you. This is a White Panther Call to Action: Get off your ass and show your support Now!!

All Power to the People!
Panther Power to the Vanguard!
Peace & Power to those who Earn

"THE MC5 WERE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO WE WERE. WE SAW A BIGGER AND BIGGER PLACE FOR OURSELVES IN THE WORLD." WAYNE KRAMER

the twin influences of mind-expanding drugs and avant-jazz.

"I thought, What's going to make us different?" said Kramer. "If I played my best Chuck Berry solo as fast as I could play it, as hard as I could play it, turned my amp up all the way, got the most distortion – where could I go from there? And when I heard John Coltrane and Sun Ra and Albert Ayler – I said, Oh, that's where you go from there. You leave the key and the beat behind and go into a kinetic, more purely sonic dimension, where you're trying to reproduce human emotion in sound.

"Thinking in terms that broad, I started to see there was actually a political component to what art could be," he continued. "We were trying to find out who we were. We started to see a bigger and bigger place for ourselves in the world and how we would fit in."

HELPING MIDWIFE THAT TRANSITION WAS JOHN Sinclair. A Detroit poet, publisher, jazz critic and self-described organiser of artists, Sinclair first saw the band perform at the 1966 Michigan State Fair and became an instant fan. "I thought they were incredible," recalls Sinclair. "At the end of every show they played an improvisational number called Black To Comm. And I thought this was the greatest thing I ever heard a rock'n'roll band do in my life. You'd have to go see them every time because it would always be different."

Sinclair eventually signed on as the band's manager. "What appealed to me is they wanted to be the greatest," he says. "They were so dedicated. I've never seen anybody that dedicated before, and it was very inspirational. We worked on their presentation until they had a show that was unstoppable. And when they peaked, I thought they were better than any band I've ever seen."

Being a great rock'n'roll band was one thing, but as the '60s wore on there was more at stake: the Vietnam War was raging, there were riots in Detroit and all across urban America; political assassinations; politics was becoming polarised – revolutionaries versus reactionaries. Sinclair and his wife Leni, along with activist Pun Plamondon, had launched the White Panther Party, allying themselves with the Black Panthers. One of the stated goals of their manifesto was "total assault on the culture by any means necessary, including rock'n'roll, dope and fucking in the street." The MC5 soon fell in as part of Sinclair's contingent, and they all took up residence in a pair of communal houses in the University of Michigan college town of Ann Arbor.

The MC5 would find another kindred spirit in Elektra Records publicist Danny Fields. Elektra, a historically upscale folk label, had scored big with The Doors in 1967 and label president Jac Holzman was suddenly hungry for more rock acts.

Fields had been hipped to the MC5 and came to Detroit in 1968 to see about signing the group. His first vision of the band was Kramer on-stage at Detroit's Grande Ballroom, "spinning around in these lime green satin bellbottoms. What a showman, I thought," says Fields. "He was a real guitar dancer. He was partnering the instrument – like Fred and Ginger, him and his guitar."

When Fields visited the band's Ann Arbor digs, "I was in shock," he says. "I was raised in the New York Jewish upper-middle class, and I walked into a real live commune. I'd never seen anything like it. The band were sort of like Vikings. But their propaganda and presentation machine was spectacular. In a way, they were art rock, like the Ramones were sort of art rock. Anyone really good is art rock anyway."

While Sinclair could be imposing and the other band members stand-offish, Fields found Kramer "so totally charming, he cut through everything with that smile and that welcomeness and that curiosity. There's certain people you encounter in life, that had ➢

Michael Ochs Archive/Getty Images, Leni Sinclair/Michael Ochs Archive/Getty Images, Joe Kohen/WireImage

"KICK 'EM OUT!"

A half-dozen of WAYNE KRAMER's fully vital platters. By MICHAEL SIMMONS.

MC5
KICK OUT THE JAMS
(Elektra, 1969)

One of the most explosive debuts in rock history – and live, to boot – the album kicks off with Brother Wayne's falsetto vocals on soul snorter Ramblin' Rose, followed by infamous title cut Kick Out The Jams (Motherfuckers). The 5 also plough through John Lee Hooker's Motor City Is Burning and culminate in Sun Ra's free jazz skronkfest Starship. Rock had never been harder or more outside.

MC5
BACK IN THE USA
(Atlantic, 1970)

The 5 release a tight studio LP compared to their sprawling live debut, bursting with compact two-minute rockers. Besides covering Little Richard and Chuck Berry, some of their finest originals are featured. Tonight and Teenage Lust are hormonal entreaties. Lead singer Rob Tyner nails R&B balladry on Let Me Try. Kramer and Fred 'Sonic' Smith's brief solo-ettes are classic, succinct rock guitar.

MC5
HIGH TIME
(Atlantic, 1971)

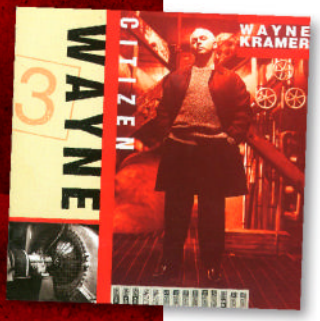
The 5's most musically mature album – proof that they were growing by leaps and bounds if only they hadn't self-destructed. The addition of horns points to a rock-soul-jazz hybrid that was never further realised, and once again the duo of Kramer and Smith was the finest blending of back-forth guitars next to the Stones. And Kramer's Miss X and Poison are power-chord perfection.

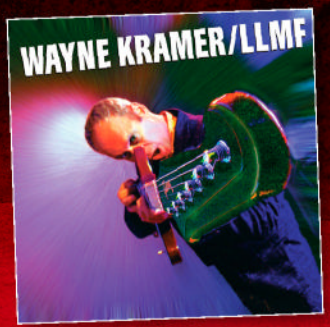
MC5
PURITY ACCURACY
(Easy Action, 2004)

A 6-CD set for die-hards, featuring selections from 1965-1970, rehearsals in Wayne's mother's basement, their first single, gigs at a wedding, school and church, a film score, a 2003 reunion, plus discs of full gigs, including one at Detroit's legendary Grande Ballroom where they recorded their debut. Demos, many instrumental and even acoustic tracks, highlight the singular musical power the 5 conjured.

WAYNE KRAMER
CITIZEN WAYNE
(Enigma, 1997)

Kramer's third solo album during his post-MC5 renaissance, co-produced by David Was, is first-rate rock'n'roll autobiography and proudly leftist political manifesto. Back When Dogs Could Talk and Revolution In Apt 29 are reflections on the 5 and their political comrades in the White Panthers, while Shining Mr Lincoln's Shoes and Count Time address union workers and prisoners.





WAYNE KRAMER
LLMF
(Enigma, 1998)

An abbreviation for 'Live Like A Mutherfucker', Kramer's backed only by bass and drums, with his astonishing guitar roaring front and centre. The songs, some co-written with ex-Deviant pal Mick Farren, cover his career, including a Kick Out The Jams remake. While many have political themes, there's also the Charles Bukowski tribute So Long, Hank and nasty fun of Take Your Clothes Off.

< they not found you, important things would not have happened. And for me it was Wayne."

During his visit, Kramer told Fields: "If you like us, you'll really love our baby brother band" – which turned out to be The Stooges. Fields signed them to Elektra as well. Fields is still amazed at the generosity of Kramer's recommendation: "In every way he was a classy guy."

FOR THE MC5's ELEKTRA DEBUT, *KICK OUT THE Jams*, the label decided to capture the group on its home turf at the Grande Ballroom, recording them live over a pair of shows in October of 1968. It would mark the start of a tumultuous year-long run on the label, filled with high drama and collateral damage.

"They never really had a chance," says Fields of the group's professional fortunes, citing an incident at Fillmore East in the spring of '69, just as the MC5 were starting a tour in support of their album. Members of New York City's hardcore hippy contingent The Motherfuckers got into a pitched battle with promoter Bill Graham over some free tickets they'd been promised. In the violent mêlée that followed, "Bill Graham gets hit over the nose with a chain, and he somehow got it in his head that Rob Tyner had assaulted him," says Fields. "Rob wouldn't hurt a leaf, much less a fly. But Graham was convinced. And that was it. He gets on the phone and it doesn't take long before the MC5 are blacklisted in every market in America. We were scrambling to find bowling alleys to play after that."

The breaking point came with the furore over the *Kick Out The Jams* album, which was initially released with the title track's famous "Motherfuckers" epithet intact. "Jac Holzman convinced me to leave it in," said Sinclair, "and then they refused to back us when the trouble that I predicted started with the record industry. Instead of supporting us, they yanked the record from the market and they censored it. It was Number 30 with a bullet when they pulled it, it sold 100,000 copies out of the chute. And then it was gone."

Significantly, the Detroit-based department store Hudson's was one of the retailers that pulled the record. In response the MC5 took out an ad in the local alternative paper, saying "Fuck Hudson's" with a prominently displayed Elektra logo. Immediately, "Hudson's emptied their entire supply of Judy Collins records," recalls Fields, "all the Elektra moneymakers were boycotted by Hudson's and it was a whole fiasco."

That was it for Holzman and Elektra. They fired Fields and parted company with the MC5. *Kick Out The Jams* stands as one of the great debut albums in rock'n'roll history, but it was nearly the band's tombstone.

"It got to a point where the expectations were too deep and too wide at the same time," said Fields. "I mean they were supposed to change the world. But how much can a rock'n'roll band really do?"

DESPITE THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE group – or perhaps because of it – the MC5 were still considered a hot act. They would bounce back from the split with Elektra, quickly signing to Atlantic Records and teaming with rock critic (and future Bruce Springsteen manager) Jon Landau, who would produce their first studio album, 1970's *Back In The USA*.

"In general, my input was musical," says Landau today. "I was coming from an R&B aspect. I liked tightness, and the MC5 were not tight. They were loose, they were rugged, not analytic about what they were doing, at times undisciplined. But Wayne and Fred were as good a guitar combination as was out there, and the lyrics and Tyner were incredible."

With Landau guiding things, *Back In The USA* would differ markedly from *Kick Out The Jams*' messy glory, with a selection of short, sharp songs – including high velocity covers of Little Richard

Kicker conspiracy: (above) MC5's Kramer and Tyner at the Grande Ballroom, Detroit, 1969; (right, from top) John Sinclair, MC5 manager/ White Panther Party founder, 1969; MC5's Kramer (left) and Smith (right) plus drummer Ritchie Dharma at Beat Forum, Høje Gladsaxe, Denmark, November 23, 1972; (insets, top) the Grande Ballroom shows where *Kick Out The Jams* was taped; the "Fuck Hudson's" ad that got the MC5 dropped by Elektra.

"THE MC5 WERE SO DEDICATED. AND WHEN THEY PEAKED, THEY WERE BETTER THAN ANY BAND I'VE EVER SEEN." JOHN SINCLAIR

and Chuck Berry – that presaged punk rock.

Kramer would later allow that the album was a somewhat reactionary affair. "We might have gone too far in responding to our critics," he said. "When Lester Bangs said [in a Rolling Stone review of *Kick Out The Jams*] I couldn't tune my guitar, that really ground my balls. And I was determined this next record was going to be rock solid."

Content-wise, however, the group had not mellowed. "I actually think *Back In The USA* is more political than *Kick Out The Jams*," said Kramer. "The problem was the album was completely out of sync with what was going on in the world. The hit songs at the time were Bridge Over Troubled Water, and Take Me Home Country Roads, and we put out this record that couldn't have been less fashionable."

Adding to their struggles, the band found themselves in the middle of a tug of war between producer Landau and manager Sinclair.

"John has said from time to time that I did a pretty good imitation of the devil," chuckles Landau. "I was reasonably political and certainly sympathetic to a lot of ideas that he happened to have. But I also knew these are five young, working-class guys who wanted to be rock stars. John wanted them to be [an extension] of the White Panther Party. I thought those things were in conflict."

In 2024, Sinclair stands his ground.

"The people in the industry felt that the only chance the band had to make it was to get rid of the political shit and the avant-garde shit," he says. "So they fired me, and I hate to say this, but then they went downhill from there – and I went to prison."

In 1969, Sinclair was busted selling two joints to an undercover police officer, and was sentenced that July to 10 years. His release eventually became a counterculture *cause célèbre* with the likes of Abbie Hoffman, John Lennon and Yoko Ono rallying to his defence; he was eventually freed in 1971.

In the end, *Back In The USA* would not produce any hits. Released in January 1970, it peaked at Number 137 on the US albums chart. Undeterred, the MC5 would move on to recording their third and final album, *High Time*, produced by British jazzer Geoffrey Haslam, who'd just come off helming The Velvet Underground's *Loaded*. Musically, *High Time* split the difference between the MC5's first two efforts, but it would fare even worse commercially, barely scraping the lower rungs of the Billboard Top 200 when released in 1971.

As the professional pressures mounted, the band would slowly break apart, with Davis and Thompson first to leave the group. The MC5 lingered a while longer, with Kramer, Smith and Tyner fronting a new rhythm section before a final split in 1972. The following year, Kramer briefly tried to revive the band with an all-new line-up, before giving up the ghost. By then he was already deep in the throes of a drug habit, grieving the loss of the band.

"At the end of the MC5, the life I'd built all those years had collapsed completely," he told me. "I lost my way to make a living, I lost my friends, I lost my status in the community, I lost my future. I didn't know how I was going to survive. So it became easier to just get loaded."

From here, Kramer's story would unfold like an Elmore Leonard novel, as he ditched the stage for a life of crime in Detroit. He became a fence, a burglar, and eventually got involved in a mafia-backed drug operation. Set up as part of a government sting, he landed in jail on federal drug charges in 1975.

"In a way, I was destined for prison," said Kramer, who refused to snitch and received a five-year sentence. "I did things according to my own rules my whole life and at a certain point you're going to run into a conflict with the world, with society… with the police. And then they gotta do something to you, they gotta get your attention. Truth is, I had waited all my life to fuck up this badly." ➢

Leni Sinclair/Michael Ochs Archive/Getty Images (2), Jorgen Angel/Getty, GAB Archive/Getty

WHILE SERVING TIME IN A FEDERAL PRISON in Lexington, Kentucky, Kramer connected with another inmate, former Charlie Parker sideman, trumpeter Red Rodney. The two began playing music for their fellow prisoners in the yard. "I could contribute and be somebody again," said Kramer of his return to music in the unlikeliest of places. "It was an identity. I didn't have to have a gangster persona. I was the white boy with the wah-wah. I could really play the guitar and people appreciated it."

Ironically, the biggest news in the music business while Kramer was inside was the explosion of punk rock, a movement built on foundations the MC5 had laid. In the UK, Stiff Records issued a benefit single to aid Kramer, while The Clash would reference him in their song Jail Guitar Doors. "I read Billboard in prison and could see the Ramones – who all looked like Fred Smith – and they would mention the MC5 was a big influence," Kramer recalled. "I didn't want people I was doing time with to know about that, 'cos they called the music 'punk', and punk had a different meaning in prison. Punks were the guys they had washing their socks."

Upon his release in 1979, Kramer would team up with former New York Doll and Heartbreaker Johnny Thunders in the short-lived and highly combustible Gang War. "I thought this is my ticket back into the rock world, because I could see the fans loved this kid," said Kramer, who tried and failed to stay straight in Thunders' company. "In reality, I knew this will never work. You can't be in business with active addicts, they have other priorities."

A more successful collaboration for Kramer came working with his fellow Detroit provocateurs Was (Not Was) on their debut album. "I was touched that he was willing to come and play on our record," says the group's Don Was. "And we learnt so much from Wayne about how to put on a show."

Mostly, though, the 1980s would be a lost decade for Kramer. He worked as a roofer and carpenter, eventually moving to Key West and Nashville, while continuing to drink and drug. It was the death of MC5 singer Rob Tyner in 1991, from a heart attack at age 46, that delivered the necessary wake-up call. "When Rob died," said Kramer, "it was like, Whoa, I didn't see that coming."

In 1992 the surviving MC5 members reunited for a show at Detroit's State Theatre to pay tribute to Tyner. Just two years later Fred 'Sonic' Smith would also pass at age 46, from heart failure. The loss of his band brothers marked a change in Kramer. "I figured, if I've got 20 or 30 more years left, I better get to work making music."

And he'd do exactly that, recording his first solo album, *The Hard Stuff*, released by Los Angeles punk label Epitaph in 1995, and two more records, *Dangerous Madness* and *Citizen Wayne* in 1996 and 1997. By the late-'90s, having connected with his partner and eventual wife Margaret Saadi, he finally had the stability to get sober.

"By then I was more covert," he said. "I was using prescription drugs as opposed to street drugs and wasn't drunk in public, but I bottomed out at 50." Getting clean meant finally reclaiming "some of the dignity I lost on my trip to the gutter and some of the self-respect that I threw away."

ALTHOUGH HE CONTINUED TO MAKE SOLO records and dedicated himself to his sobriety, Kramer's passion, his real mission, remained the MC5. "I assumed the role of curator of the MC5's legacy," he said. "I started the band, and even though I could barely control it, it was my baby."

In 2000, Kramer helped produce the first ever career-spanning MC5 compilation, *The Big Bang*, for Rhino. Soon, the band was being rediscovered by a new generation of fans while a merchandising deal with Levi's saw the unlikeliest celebrities donning the group's gear: Jennifer Aniston clad in her MC5 T-shirt on an episode of Friends; Justin Timberlake modelling his on the cover of Vibe magazine.

In 2002, a feature-length documentary on the group, The MC5: A True Testimonial – which Kramer had been involved in for several years – made its premiere. The film, universally praised by those who saw it during its run on the festival circuit, seemed poised to help kick off a full-scale MC5 revival. But disagreements between

Here's looking at you: (clockwise from above) Wayne Kramer's mugshots upon arriving at the Federal Correctional Institution in Lexington, Kentucky, April 25, 1976, where he spent 26 months in custody for drug-dealing; Wayne joins Was (Not Was) in the ASCAP Music Cafe at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival (from left) Don Was, Kramer, Narada Michael Walden and Sweet Pea Atkinson; Kramer in 2012 at his LA studio with one of the acoustic guitars given to prison inmates as part of his Jail Guitar Doors USA initiative; Brother Wayne on-stage with the MC50 at London's O2 Arena, October 10, 2019; Kramer's 2018 memoir; MC5's Kramer, Thompson and Davis, 2004.

Kramer and the filmmakers have hindered a wider official release.

Still, Kramer soldiered on. In 2003, he and the surviving MC5 members, Thompson and Davis, reunited for a show at the 100 Club in London, supported by guests including Lemmy, Dave Vanian and Ian Astbury of The Cult. The gig led to a full scale DKT/MC5 tour the following year, with a rotating cast of characters handling vocals, including Mudhoney's Mark Arm.

"Wayne was great at getting people who were sympathetic, who understood it," says Arm. "Like Lisa Kekaula from The Bellrays or 'Handsome' Dick Manitoba, Deniz Tek in Australia. Even Marshall Crenshaw, who was a surprise to me, but he grew up in Detroit, and he was a motherfucker, he was great. Wayne was amazing at finding the members of this extended MC5 tribe all over the world."

While the tour was considered a success, Kramer would later admit that familiar grievances resurfaced among the original members. "It was my great hope that Dennis and Michael could enjoy it and appreciate it. I hope they did… but by the end they didn't," he said. "It made it kind of hard." (Davis would pass away in 2012, at the age of 68, from liver failure.)

Kramer shifted his focus to film and TV scoring work while devoting himself to various activist efforts. Along with his wife Margaret and Billy Bragg, Kramer launched the Jail Guitar Doors USA initiative in 2009, which provided instruments and mentorship to help rehabilitate the incarcerated. Kramer would later help found

Fred Hayes/Getty, Linda Nylind/Getty, Lorne Thomson/Getty, Alamy/AP Photo/Chris Pizzello

"WAYNE WAS A REAL GUITAR DANCER. HE WAS PARTNERING THE INSTRUMENT – LIKE FRED AND GINGER, HIM AND HIS GUITAR." DANNY FIELDS

another nonprofit, the C.A.P.O. Center in Los Angeles, which offered music, arts and entertainment outreach and opportunities to at-risk youth.

Was recalls a prison show he played with Kramer at New York's infamous Sing Sing. "Which is hardcore," notes Was. "Wayne got up and led an AA meeting before we played. But this was only one of hundreds of prisons he visited. He was totally committed."

A MORE PERSONAL KIND OF DEVOTION CAME to Kramer in his mid sixties, with the birth of his son Francis in 2013.

"The love of a parent is everything," mused Kramer. "Looking back, that's why I didn't destroy myself. Even though so much of my behaviour was self-destructive, my own mother instilled enough love in me that on my worst fucking day, I never woke up and said, I hate living. Love, man, that makes all the difference."

The journey of his life became the subject of Kramer's compelling 2018 memoir The Hard Stuff: Dope, Crime, The MC5 & My Life Of Impossibilities. Kramer's mentor John Sinclair would rate the book as Kramer's most significant achievement. "His autobiography was a tremendous work of art," Sinclair says. "Wayne was a great writer, and it was because he was self-aware in a big way."

Inevitably, the last few years of Kramer's life saw him return, once again, to the MC5. In 2018, on the 50th anniversary of *Kick Out The Jams*, he undertook another major tour celebrating the group, billing it as the MC50, and working with a new core line-up that included vocalist Brad Brooks, drummer Winston Watson, bassist Vicki Randle, and guitarist Steve Salas. The momentum from the tour would lead Kramer to begin work on a new MC5 record during the Covid pandemic, the band's first LP since *High Time*.

Canadian producer Bob Ezrin, whom Kramer had connected with through Alice Cooper, was tapped to helm the project, titled *Heavy Lifting*, which features contributions from original MC5er Dennis Thompson, as well Living Colour's Vernon Reid, Slash, Tom Morello and Don Was. "From the moment we decided this was an MC5 project it became a mission for Wayne to fully capture that spirit," says Ezrin. "But also to make this big tent and bring in anybody whose values and background were consistent with the MC5."

The album, a support tour, as well as a new book on the MC5 – a definitive oral history co-authored by late MOJO scribe Ben Edmonds – were among the band projects Kramer was anticipating in 2024. He'd already been making the press rounds touting the new LP when his health issues began to surface. Kramer would pass peacefully on February 2 in a Los Angeles hospital.

"The day he died I never saw the phones light up so much," said Danny Fields. "He had so much life. He was high energy. That was the MC5's mantra – high energy. And Wayne was a high energy presence. That energy was felt when he was alive, and it continues even after he's gone."

For Don Was, the news of Kramer's passing meant the loss of a great, influential artist, but something more, too.

"My first thought about Wayne isn't about music, it's about the kind of friend he was," said Was, who 20 years ago was lost in his own addictions. "He could see that I was not in very good shape. He took me out and let me know that I wasn't fooling anybody. And that if I needed some help and wanted some help, he was there for me. He set me on the path to recovery. Without Wayne, I wouldn't be here today. I can tell you that definitively."

"He was a good man, with a capital G," says Bob Ezrin. "He had principles by which he lived, and committed himself to the welfare of others. I can't think of a better legacy to leave than that."

Special thanks to Margaret Saadi Kramer, Jason Reynolds, and Jakub Blackman.

CYMANDE PUT UK FUNK ON THE MAP

Let there be nyah-rock: Cymande (left to right) Derrick Gibbs, Mike 'Bami' Rose, Steve Scipio, Patrick Patterson, Sam Kelly and Pablo Gonsales on-stage at the Rainbow Theatre, London, 1975; (above right) a poster for the 2022 documentary Getting It Back; (right) 1972 eponymous debut LP.

From south London via the Caribbean, they launched their super-rhythmic psych-funk 'nyah-rock' in the clubs of Britain in 1971. Success awaited in America, where they headlined the Harlem Apollo, toured with Al Green and sowed hip-hop seeds with killer cuts like Dove and Bra. Yet Britain didn't know what it had, and in 1974 they began a 40-year hiatus. "You can't be superstars coming from Balham," say the resurgent band, friends and admirers, "[but] we were so ahead of our time we still fit in." Interviews by **DAVID HUTCHEON**

Steve Scipio: Patrick Patterson and I had been in Metre, a jazz band, but our drummer was moving to Australia. Then we worked with Mike Rose in Ginger Johnson's African Drummers while formulating Cymande. We didn't want to do pop music or go back to jazz, we wanted to do something more expressive in terms of our personalities and messages we might communicate.

Mike Rose: When I met them I was into percussion and African music. I was a fan of Roland Kirk and played flute but I took up saxophone seriously just before I joined Cymande. I introduced a Rastafarian flavour to the band and I brought in percussionist Pablo Gonsales, who had the Rasta vibe.

Pablo Gonsales: I didn't go to school to learn drums, it's all coming from within. It's like a gift was handed down to me from my ancestors. I was born with it and it's spiritual.

Patrick Patterson: Pablo was a special guy, our talisman, and had a real spirituality. He brought something special to our rhythmic sensibility, something nobody else was doing.

Sam Kelly: Cymande was my first gig, I was 17. They had a show at the Oval in south London and needed a drummer. Somebody walked past my house and heard me banging on my brother's kit. They didn't know if I was good, bad or indifferent, but they came down to ask me and I ended up playing with them.

Derrick Gibbs: Steve asked me to ➢

Courtesy Partisan Records

Giving up the funk: (clockwise from above) Cymande recording their debut LP, De Lane Lea Recording Studios, Soho, London, 1972; Patrick Patterson (back, left) and Steve Scipio (back, right) with Ginger Johnson (far left) & His African Messengers, Dublin, 1971; ace of bass: Scipio in his floppy hat; 1973's *Second Time Round* LP; tearing the roof off live in the early '70s.

"IF YOU GO TO THE APOLLO FOR A WEEK AND DON'T GET BOOED, YOU'RE GOOD."

Derrick Gibbs

join for that gig. I was playing alto with a jazz band and came from the cool side, be-bop, not the extensions that Coltrane took, they were a bit much for me.

SK: It was a combination of these people, some players, some not, bringing whatever they had to this mixture. We threw it up in the air and Cymande and Cymande's music came down, without anybody saying: "We are going to do this."

SS: In London, we were playing the 100 Club, Upstairs at Ronnie Scott's and the Pheasantry on King's Road. They were very important venues for bands making music that was slightly different. I'm not sure the working-men's clubs in the north of England understood what was going on.

SK: One time we played a northern club and all the classics came out, you know: "We're going to do the bingo in the middle of your set." And it was just wonderful, with all these heavy-duty Yorkshire people accepting an all-black band playing only original material, and they made us feel very welcome.

PP: Our booker brought John Schroeder to see us and he loved the originality of it, the freshness.

John Schroeder: I was going to listen to another band, but there was all this noise. I pushed my way down and the dancefloor was packed with people bopping around to this music. The rhythms were incredibly exciting. I thought, I like what I hear, I'm going to try something in the studio with them.

PP: John wanted to get that music down, developed and out as fast as possible. He didn't seek to fashion music of his own conception using Cymande. He left it as it was, as we made it.

SS: He wanted to capture whatever it was he heard when he saw us, and put it on vinyl. We released the album *Cymande* in the UK in 1972, but it didn't have any reaction. There was nothing happening with it.

JS: I left a cassette with Marvin Schlacter of the [California-based] Janus label and that was the start of it all. He went absolutely bananas about it. The songs Bra and The Message got this incredible reaction from the US college movement, and then it got in the national charts. I told the band: I've fixed up an American manager for you. "What?" You're going to the States. "Whaaat?" They got really scared about going to America. I got in trouble with the wives.

SK: I was scared. I didn't want to go, especially with the history of black people in America. I had a good time though, it broadened my experience, but everything seemed so huge. The bass player was about half a mile off to my left, the guitarist was about the same distance off to my right, the horns were in another country altogether. That's when the terror came. We were used to looking in each other's eyes, and playing off that.

SS: The band was still relatively new. We formed in late 1971; 1972 we were recording; and early 1973 we were touring the States. So everything moved really quickly.

MR: The first gig we did was in Louisville, Kentucky. There was a power failure, so we started to play Zion I, a Rasta chant, and myself and Pablo doubled down on some serious drums, congas and bongos, to create a vibe until power was restored.

DG: When we got to the Apollo, which was a Mecca of music for me, that was it. That was *it*. Billy Preston was on the show in Washington DC. And being on tour with Al Green…

PP: I don't think you could get bigger. You have to appreciate that Al Green then was the equivalent of Beyoncé now. He was at the top of his power, absolutely massive.

SS: We were playing football stadiums. We're talking about 40,000 to 50,000 people.

MR: We didn't know we were supporting him until we saw the concert programme. I think we did better on the college circuit than we did on the concert circuit, but by the time we got to the Apollo in Harlem we were really in tune with the audiences. The MC was Screamin' Jay Hawkins, he introduced us. We were given 20 minutes, but I think we were up to the task.

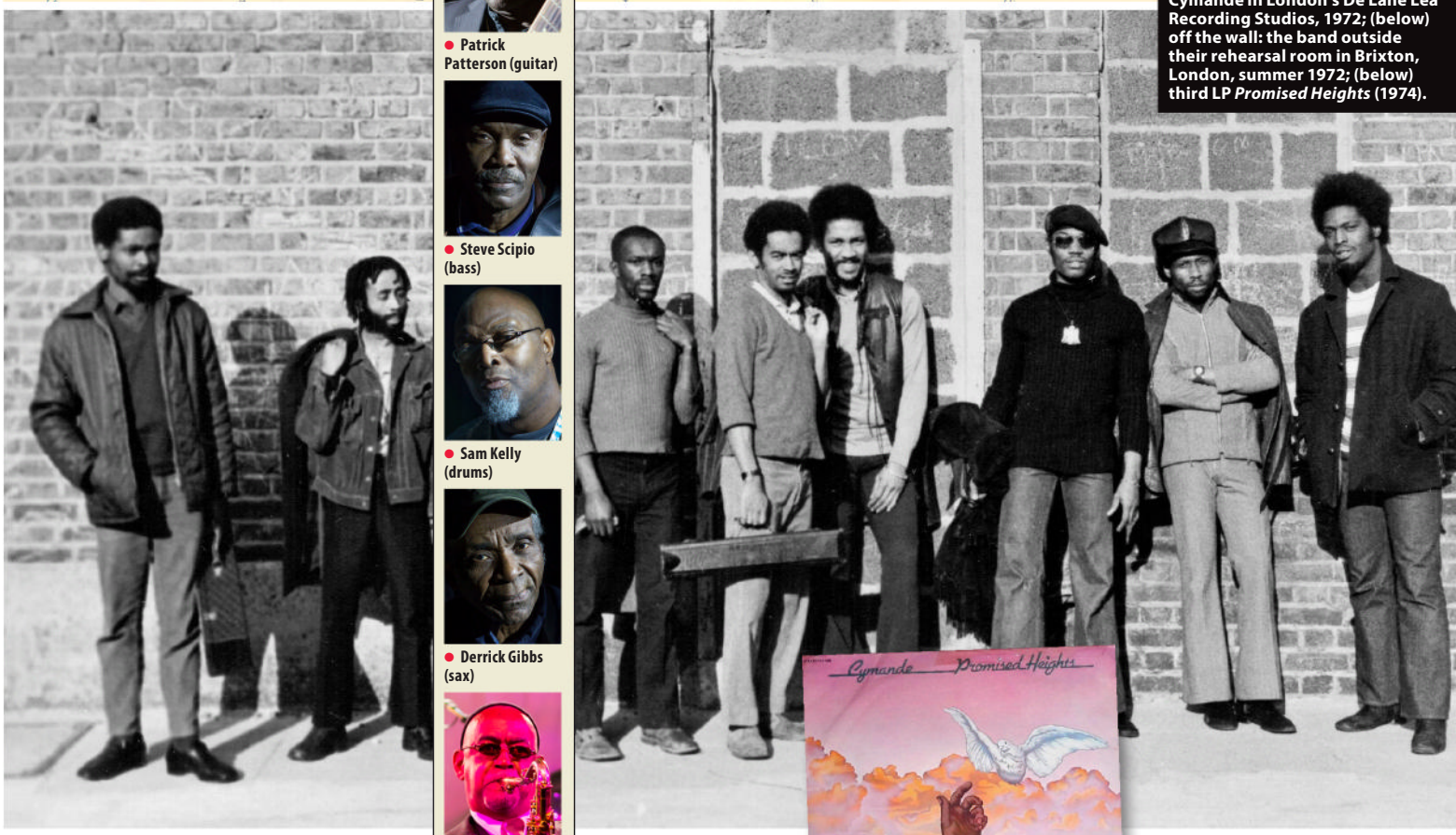
PP: We had broken in the university and college circuit, so there was this groundswell of appreciation of Cymande's music and there would have been some saying to themselves: "This is interesting, we haven't heard this before. Let's give it a little listen." Our fanbase in America at that time seemed to be quite widespread.

SK: Seeing Americans dancing and enjoying what we were doing, that was completely different to what was happening to us in England. We went to Philadelphia, Washington, South Carolina… as we moved further south, the crowds were more responsive. And even more so on the second tour. It was the American audiences that sustained us.

DG: They accepted us because we were different. We followed James Brown into the Apollo when he was the thing, and if you go to the Apollo for a week and don't get booed, you're good. Our

Getty, Sarah Lancaster (5), Courtesy Partisan Records (11)

When Dove flew: (above) Cymande in London's De Lane Lea Recording Studios, 1972; (below) off the wall: the band outside their rehearsal room in Brixton, London, summer 1972; (below) third LP *Promised Heights* (1974).



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Patrick Patterson (guitar)

- Steve Scipio (bass)

- Sam Kelly (drums)

- Derrick Gibbs (sax)

- Mike Rose (sax/flute)

- Pablo Gonsales (percussion, died 2020)

- John Schroeder (manager, died 2017)

- DJ Hollywood (turntable pioneer)

- DJ Jazzy Jay (Afrika Bambaataa's Universal Zulu Nation)

music was going down in the discos, we were on the charts in America for weeks. We were crossing over.

DJ Hollywood: 1972, going to '73, I'm playing after-hours places all across Harlem and Bra comes out. Once that hit, I don't care if you ain't dancing, when that drop hits you, you are automatically involved. If you got a cowbell, you going to beat the shit out of it. When that break hit, I seen people lose their minds.

DJ Jazzy Jay: It was so good you had to bring that break back one more time. You had to have two copies to mix. This was a five-minute song that we used to play for 10-15 minutes. And that was the beginning of hip-hop. No matter how you slice it and dice it, if it wasn't for songs like Bra there would be no hip-hop.

PP: We recorded three or four tracks for the third album at Chess studios in Chicago. There was history there that we were aware of, but that's something that sinks in as the years go by.

DG: After *Promised Heights*, the third album, was not accepted in England we had to find different ways to survive. We had the spirit between us but everyone had to do their own thing. We didn't lie down and die.

SS: The industry would have been aware of the reception the band had in the States and you would have thought this would have generated some interest from them in the UK, but there was zilch here when we returned.

PP: The disappointment was about how the industry had not done what it should do in terms of having Cymande do something really interesting, unusual, successful… you can't be superstars coming from Balham.

SK: We did two American tours virtually back-to-back, but when we came home we couldn't get a gig down at the Dog & Duck. We weren't getting anywhere so we decided to have a break for a while… but the break lasted 40 years.

PG: The only thing that was bad was when the band broke up. Any musician would be frustrated. You play good music and you haven't fulfilled your destiny, but the Creator has put everybody on the Earth for a reason and I've finished what I'm supposed to be doing.

SK: I kept working and I'd be in a club and hear things like The Message or Bra. That's when I knew we were still being recognised. That's a legacy.

SS: On a couple of occasions, my oldest children said they thought they'd heard a piece of our music on another thing they were listening to. When the Fugees sampled Dove [on *The Score*], that was when the significance of what was happening came on.

SK: Today, I'm hearing what others heard 50 years ago. Initially, I didn't like what I did. My drumming technique changed. I couldn't listen to it because it sounded very naive. Once in a while I'll get an album out and listen to it and think: I don't remember that.

DG: When I listen now I realise we were so ahead of our time we still fit in.

SK: We were still being recognised, it's good music and it is part of my history, so we thought, Why not try giving it back to the public again, 40 years later? Get as many of the old guys together and we're back out.

PG: It was always on my mind that the band was going to come back together so when it happened I wasn't surprised, but I didn't know they would take so long.

DG: It wasn't difficult to get back together; unfinished business needed to be completed.

PP: We've made a really interesting, substantial contribution to hip-hop and rap music, but music is a thing that comes from nowhere and everywhere and creates something important in individuals. If we've done anything it's that we've been able to bring different things together. And being part of that is very powerful to me.

Promised Heights, Cymande's third album, is reissued on May 17. Their first two albums are currently available. Getting It Back: The Story Of Cymande is available on BFI Blu-ray. Cymande are touring throughout 2024. See cymandeofficial.com. Pablo Gonsales, John Schroeder, DJ Hollywood and DJ Jazzy Jay quotes from Getting It Back.

BROTHERS

Troubled souls unite: Eddie Vedder on-stage with Pearl Jam at Chicago Stadium, March 10, 1994.

GONNA WORK IT OUT

Forty years since the first Green River demos, 30 since the death of Kurt Cobain sank their world in chaos, PEARL JAM abide, flying a flag for rock's outsiders, finding new ways to express their anger and their hope. A new album, *Dark Matter*, testifies to their uniqueness as musicians, but also as people. "We got through by looking out for each other," they tell DAVID FRICKE.

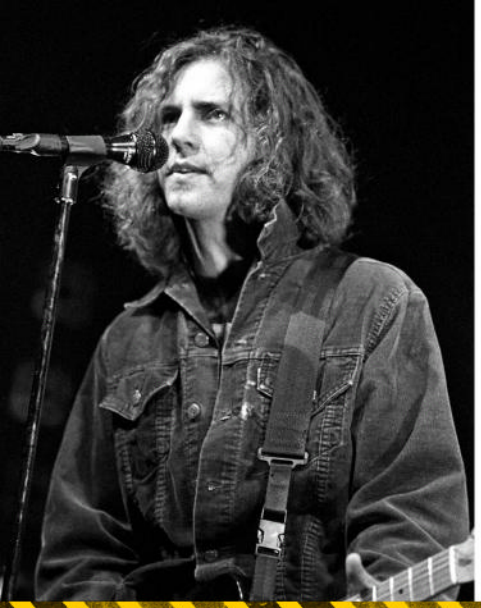
Photograph by LANCE MERCER.

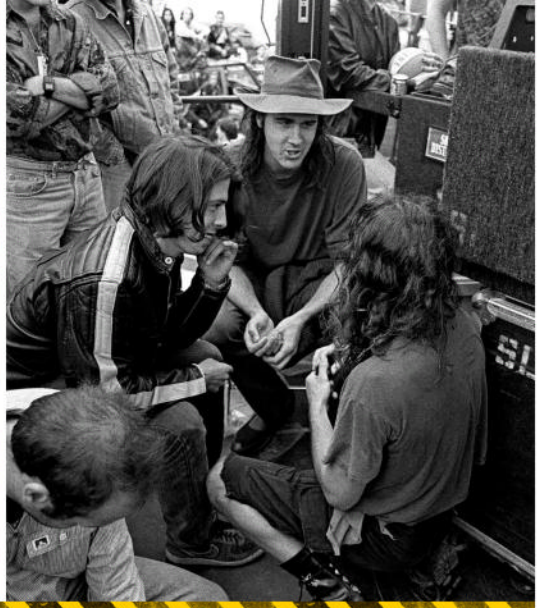
Lance Mercer

PEARL JAM WERE ON THE ROAD, A WEEK AWAY FROM finishing a half-year blur of theatres and arenas for their second album, 1993's *Vs* – two hours every night of guitar stampede and confessional howl for audiences as unhinged in their love as the band was in performance – when the darkness fell like a hammer. On April 8, 1994 in Seattle, Pearl Jam's birthplace and rock's chaotic ground zero for the last three years, Nirvana's desperately troubled singer-guitarist Kurt Cobain – struggling with drug addiction and an overwhelming fame – was found dead in his home of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

A few hours later, at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, Virginia, Pearl Jam opened with the mourning in Release from their 1991 multi-platinum debut, *Ten*. A pensive-to-frenzied march rooted in singer-lyricist Eddie Vedder's teenage anguish over a biological father he never got to know, it was one of the first songs he wrote with the group after he moved to Seattle in the fall of 1990. It was also the first number Vedder sang live with bassist Jeff Ament, guitarists Stone Gossard and Mike McCready and then-drummer Dave Krusen that October at the Off Ramp in Seattle – Pearl Jam's inaugural club date, before they had a name.

On this night, Release kicked off a long rush into deepening shadows – Go, Animal and Dissident from *Vs*; the brutal sorrow in *Ten*'s Jeremy – before Pearl Jam ➢





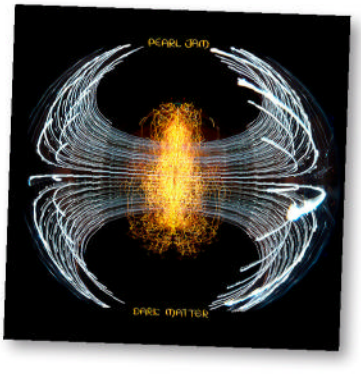
directly addressed the void in the room: via Neil Young's Hey, Hey, My, My (Out Of The Blue), quoted in Cobain's suicide note, and a song about another day "the music died", Don McLean's American Pie. "Sometimes, whether you like it or not, people elevate you… and it's very easy to fall," Vedder told the crowd. "But I don't think any of us would be in this room if it weren't for Kurt Cobain." Then he counted the band into more *Ten* dynamite, a furious reading of Even Flow.

A week earlier, in Miami, Vedder introduced the song as "a bit of street education", a lesson in the scourge and daily trials of homelessness. But there was another strife in there now: the success that drives you to madness and worse. "Faces that he sees time again ain't that familiar… Dark grin, he can't help/When he's happy he looks insane," Vedder sang, conceding the profound, interior warfare he shared with Cobain, up to a point. Because Pearl Jam's singer remained in the fight, armed with the band that saved his life. "Oh someday yet he'll begin his life again," Vedder went on with gritty assurance. "Life again, life again."

THIRTY YEARS LATER, ON THE EVE OF RELEASING their twelfth studio album, *Dark Matter*, Pearl Jam's founding core recall that shock and afterburn as if they still fill the rear-view mirror. Ament speaks of an earlier loss that shattered, then changed his life: singer Andrew Wood of the Seattle glam-metal band Mother Love Bone, founded with Ament and Gossard in 1988 and suddenly over in March 1990 when Wood died of a heroin overdose at 24. It was during their initial rehearsals for Pearl Jam that Ament and Gossard first recorded with McCready and Vedder – joining singer Chris Cornell and drummer Matt Cameron of Soundgarden on a memorial album for Wood, released in 1991 as *Temple Of The Dog*.

"Any unresolved feelings I had when Andy passed all came back," Ament says. "And I was thinking about Krist and Dave" – Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic and drummer Dave Grohl – "because of what Stone and I had gone through with Andy." There was also "the worrying about each other" in Pearl Jam. "All of a sudden, you had money. Everybody wants to be with you. Early on, I'd get out of Seattle, go back to Montana" where Ament was born and grew up. "It was selfish," he admits. "I did it for survival."

"It was a whirlwind," McCready remembers, noting a painful coincidence: Cobain died three days before he was found: on April 5, McCready's birthday. "Ed felt the pressure," the guitarist says. "All of a sudden, he was the focal point, and that was on top of the pressure we were already feeling." Whenever Vedder climbed into the lighting rig or jumped from a balcony during a Pearl Jam concert, "I was like, Wait a second, dude, slow down." After every show, "I'd go, Is this over?"



But Pearl Jam had "patience" and a "stubborn perseverance," Gossard contends. "We were searching for the purity of being ourselves in the way that Kurt could be himself in his songwriting, his art. Right now we're able to make a record," referring to *Dark Matter*, "that can be close to the essence of that for us. But we had to stick around to get here."

"This could be our last show in fuckin' forever," Vedder said back at the crossroads, talking to Melody Maker's Allan Jones on April 17, 1994 in New York City, the last date of the *Vs* tour. "I don't know where we go from here. Maybe nowhere." But after a cleansing mayhem on-stage that included a powerful new song of resistance, Not For You, destined for Pearl Jam's next album, *Vitalogy*, Vedder caught up with Jones at the post-gig party. "I think we'll be OK," he said, giving the writer a hug. "We'll be OK."

"It's a brotherhood," Vedder says firmly today. "That was never in doubt. There might have been a few speed bumps in the road. But we got through those by looking out for each other. In that way, we felt secure."

Pearl Jam – with Cameron, who joined in 1998 and was actually there at the start, playing drums on their first demos – are now the Last Band Standing, the most successful intact survivors of their Seattle class of revolutionary misfits: more than 100 million albums sold worldwide; consistently sold-out arena and stadium tours. They have also been left to preside over an astounding roll call of fatality, too often to despair and addiction: from Wood and Cobain to Layne Staley of Alice In Chains (2002); Cornell (2017); Mark Lanegan and Van Conner of Screaming Trees (2022 and 2023). At one point in a candid, wide-ranging conversation for Pearl Jam's first MOJO cover story, Vedder considers a suggestion that, in the turbulence of 1993 and '94, few people would have put money on his band going the distance.

"Do you remember that picture of David Bowie, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed?" he says after a pause, referring to Mick Rock's famous shot of that trinity, arm in arm, at a London hotel in July, 1972. "Who do you think would have been the last man standing? You would not have bet on Iggy Pop."

Vedder laughs.

"So you never know."

Danny Clinch, Ebet Roberts/Getty, Eddie Malluk/IconicPix, Lance Mercer

Let us not fade: Pearl Jam in Seattle, Washington, February 8, 2024 (from left) Mike McCready, Stone Gossard, Eddie Vedder, Matt Cameron, Jeff Ament; (opposite from left) Vedder on-stage at Paramount Theater, New York, April 17, 1994; Mother Love Bone, New York, 1989 (clockwise from top left) Bruce Fairweather, Andrew Wood, Jeff Ament, Stone Gossard, Greg Gilmore; Nirvana's Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic with Vedder at Drop In The Park, Seattle, September 20, 1992.

"Seattle is like a swamp. Something has to sit there for a long time before it turns into nutrients." STONE GOSSARD

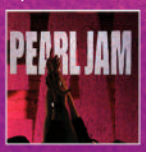
STICKY CONTENT

All the Pearl Jam studio albums, rated by KEITH CAMERON.

TEN

★★★★

(Epic, 1991)



Six months after singer Andrew Wood fatally overdosed, the core of Seattle hard rock hopefuls Mother Love Bone auditioned a singer who'd written lyrics to two of their new band's songs while surfing. Pearl Jam's debut was duly conceived out of tragedy, infused with a mystic spirit, and offered a Valhalla feast of hot fret action. The bombast got tempered on 2009's remix, but songs like Alive and Even Flow endure for good reason.

VS

★★★

(Epic, 1993)

Whatever your definition of 'grunge', *Ten* was more along-for-the-ride than driving-the-bus. Possibly stung by purist opprobrium, *Vs* dressed down the Bad Company licks and permitted distortion, without ever conveying the sense the band were certain this was how to follow their surprise hit debut. But Eddie Vedder's angst avatar was authentically dark-eyed on Daughter, while Rearviewmirror's riff chase was pure berserker thrill. The start of a fruitful bond with producer Brendan O'Brien.

VITALOGY

★★★★

(Epic, 1994)

Despite being written and recorded amidst inner turmoil – guitarist Mike McCready's rehab, drummer Dave Abbruzzese's imminent sacking – and with its release overshadowed by the band's dispute with Ticketmaster, *Vitalogy* presented Pearl Jam at last realising a sonic identity that felt inimitably their own. Perhaps not coincidentally, this was the album where Vedder assumed control of the band's musical direction: the vibe was scruffier, the top lines stronger. Better Man and Corduroy remain setlist staples.

NO CODE

★★★★★

(Epic, 1996)

Four albums in, the 'Jam figure out how to jam, boosted by new drummer Jack Irons' expansive polyrhythmic capability, and the results are remarkable. From the hardcore smash of Lukin – inspired by Vedder's stalker hell – to I'm Open's minimalist mantra, from the doomed youth anthem Present Tense to Smile's uncanny Neil Young homage, here was a band re-learning the art of communication. As Stone Gossard later reflected: "*No Code* is pivotal."

YIELD

★★★★

(Epic, 1998)

After calling a truce with Ticketmaster, Pearl Jam discovered they could engage with the commercial world and still maintain artistic integrity. Given To Fly and In Hiding were anthems for people who mistrust flags, with Vedder exultant amid the band's newfound contemplative dynamic, rendering the epic intimate and vice versa. Do The Evolution, meanwhile, satirised capitalism from the perspective of an ape meeting a right-wing greedhead. *Yield* heralded an exciting new dawn.

BINAURAL

★★

(Epic, 2000)

A dawn that quickly faded. Jack Irons quitting for health reasons was bad luck, but an album dominated by unprepossessing material recorded with a new producer, Tchad Blake, experimenting with the titular recording method when your latest drummer was Soundgarden rock godhead Matt Cameron seemed perverse (as did leaving Sad in the 'Lost Dogs' pile). The approach actually better suited the gentler songs – Light Years is a gem – but despite Brendan O'Brien's remixing, the stilted *Binaural* ultimately satisfied no one.

"PEARL JAM DISCOVERED THEY COULD ENGAGE WITH THE COMMERCIAL WORLD AND MAINTAIN ARTISTIC INTEGRITY."

RIOT ACT

★★★★

(Epic, 2002)

No less opaque than its predecessor, *Riot Act* had redemptive forces at its core. Mostly recorded live, Pearl Jam got their experimental groove back, with some songs reportedly materialising as the tapes rolled, and others – notably Cameron's You Are and Get Right – snapping with a left-field pop nous few imagined this band possessing. Then there was Bu$hleaguer, a mordant evisceration of the US President, and Love Boat Captain, a post-Roskilde elegy.

PEARL JAM

★★★★

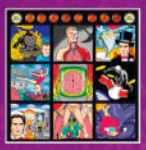
(J, 2006)

The mid-career self-titling flagged 'Avocado''s fresh start even before a note was heard – then Life Wasted tore out of the grooves like a caged rat, the urgency maintained throughout, be it the raw AC/DC growl of World Wide Suicide or the surf garage romp Big Wave. With several lyrics inspired by the US political landscape, Pearl Jam clearly felt the imperative for direct audience engagement – and remembered that it suited them.

BACKSPACER

★★★

(Monkeywrench/Universal, 2009)



The band's imminent 20th anniversary was deemed the moment to belatedly go new wave; returning producer Brendan O'Brien took barely a month to help whip out the shortest PJ album (37 minutes). Some of the snap-happy cuts could actually have used more evolution, but The Fixer and Got Some vindicated the notion of EdVed fronting The Police. Even the ballads had zip, while Unthought Known was a ready-made arena air puncher.

LIGHTNING BOLT

★★★

(Monkeywrench/Republic, 2013)

The efficacy of O'Brien's tight-ship regimen on *Backspacer* was emphasised by its successor. *Lightning Bolt* sessions began in 2012, then paused for a year of hum and hah plus side-projects, and the sense that no one ever reconvened on the same page haunts this fitful collection. In the credit column: Sirens, an unabashed McCready power ballad that Vedder sung into the next dimension.

GIGATON

★★★★

(Monkeywrench/Republic, 2020)

Co-produced with engineer Josh Evans and even longer in the pot than *Lightning Bolt*, the eco-conceptual *Gigaton* improbably vindicated the five-guys-cook-a-pizza approach to record making. Amidst its wild moodswings and occasional missteps, this was a collectively invested, creatively intrepid PJ sometimes missing from the band's 21st century output. Stadium folk (Retrograde), cosmic country-prog (Seven O'Clock), iceberg disco (Dance Of The Clairvoyants): all here and more besides, on an epic soundtrack for dangerous times.

Welcome to the *Ten* club: (from left) Dave Abbruzzese, Ament and Vedder, MTV Awards, Los Angeles, September 2, 1993.

Going with the flow: Pearl Jam in 1992 (clockwise from top left) McCready, Ament, Abbruzzese, Vedder, Gossard.

IT WAS A REMARKABLE STATEMENT FROM AN unlikely source. At a preview event for *Dark Matter* at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, Vedder – notoriously leery of the standard rock'n'roll salesmanship – told the assembled media, "No hyperbole, I think this is our best work."

The band's co-producer Andrew Watt, at the Troubadour that day, was pleasantly stunned. The 33-year-old multiple-Grammy winner – whose hits and credibility run the gamut from Justin Bieber and Dua Lipa to Ozzy Osbourne and The Rolling Stones' *Hackney Diamonds* – never heard Vedder or anyone else in Pearl Jam rave like that during the sessions.

But "Eddie was bringing it" on every take, Watt exclaims, "covered in sweat after finishing a vocal." And McCready "hasn't ripped this much in a long time. I would literally cheer for him at the end of his solos, because that's what I had done for so long in the crowd." The producer, a lifelong fan already in hog heaven as he worked on Vedder's third solo album, *Earthling*, gleefully admits he wore a different Pearl Jam tour shirt to the studio every day for *Dark Matter*. "And we ignored that," Vedder says with a grainy chuckle. "I'm like, Guys, hang in there, just hear what it sounds like."

The album starts with a snap to attention: the crack of a pool cue breaking the table (credited to Vedder's friend Sean Penn and taped by the singer on his phone), then the enraged stutter of Gossard's guitar in Scared Of Fear, a maelstrom caught on Pearl Jam's first day with Watt in April 2021, in the basement studio of the producer's Beverly Hills house. React, Respond follows with a jump to even higher speed, also cut at Watt's place and exuberantly scarred by Ament's growling, distorted bass. So far, so 1991-94.

"Stone had a great riff," Ament says of Scared Of Fear. "It was just getting in a circle and throwing things out: 'Let's do this.' Within five minutes of having the bones of the arrangement, Ed came up with the crux of the lyrics" – a feral summation of endangered joys and communion that could be about love, friendship or, in the chorus, the old Seattle ("We used to laugh/We used to sing/We used to dance/We used to believe").

Pearl Jam's last album, 2020's *Gigaton*, was a more glacial experience. "The five of us made demos for ages," Gossard says. "But it was individual efforts with people adding on." For Vedder, that process – three years "under our own roof" in Seattle – "was like building the laboratory at the same time you're trying to come up with the cure."

In comparison, the live-band guts of *Dark Matter* came from four days in Watts' basement in 2021 and two weeks in the summer of 2022 at Shangri-La, the Malibu studio built in the '70s by The Band (it is now owned by Rick Rubin) and the setting for Martin Scorsese's interviews with that group in his 1978 documentary, The Last Waltz. "Bands from our generation – we've played gigs forever," Cameron says. "We can set up anywhere and get right into a performance – loud guitar riffs, loud drumming, melodic hard rock. We've been doing it for decades."

But Vedder felt like he was "tapping into a sacred space" at Shangri-La. The singer first saw The Last Waltz – "My introduction to so much music" – as a teenager in Chicago, taken by an uncle. He now has a poster for the film hanging in his home studio next to a bass guitar, bought in an auction, played by The Band's Rick Danko.

"I can't tell you how much it meant to be in that spot," Vedder says exultantly. "To be there with the pool table, the picnic table in the backyard, all these parts in the film where I thought they were all sitting in a bar – it was like mining energy in a safe place." In terms of his lyric writing, "It was a huge part of being able to go deep."

"I tried to produce this album from the crowd," Watt says. "What do we want as Pearl Jam fans? We want Eddie giving us that emotion, Jeff and Stone getting the stuff down, Matt pushing the band." But there is pop too – with gravitas. "Visited by thoughts/And not just in the night/That I no longer give a fuck/Who is wrong and who's right," Vedder sings in Wreckage, a plaintive stomp – a Pearl Jam signature – streaked with jangling Telecaster sun (played by Watt in an open-G tuning he learned from the Stones' Keith ➢

Frank Micelotta/ImageDirect/Getty, Tony Mottram/Camera Press

➢ Richards). In Upper Hand, the melancholy at the front ("The distance to the end/Is closer now/Than it's ever been") gives way to a heavy Beatle-esque ascent like *Abbey Road* at the barricades.

Dark Matter is Pearl Jam's most effective resolution since 1996's seriously eclectic *No Code* of their sometimes dissonant ambitions as songwriters: the commercially immediate hard rock classicism of *Ten* and 2006's *Pearl Jam*; and that wilful experimental tilt in texture and reflection on records like 2000's *Binaural*. But this is a famously idealistic band now in late-middle age, assessing unfinished business and not happy about it. "I'm feeling done in, it's rather stunning," Vedder snaps in Running, a two-minute Fugazi-style blitz.

The singer, though, won't give up on the rescue and renewal in music. Asked about the title character in Waiting For Stevie, a mighty wall of *Ten* guitars glazed with bright, harmony vocals, Vedder describes "a young girl not feeling appreciated by her peers, who finds relief and connection in music at a show," noting his own teenage salvation when he first heard The Who's 1973 Mod opera *Quadrophenia*. "I felt more understood by that record than by teachers, family or peers."

Then Vedder tells a story about taking one of his daughters to a Taylor Swift concert and "the run-up to it, making friendship bracelets with her and the generosity of these young girls and boys, trading these bracelets with different messages on them – lyrics, song titles, just acts of good will on these little bracelets. They had found their tribe; they were all agreeing on something.

"The craziest thing," he goes on, "was it reminded me of punk rock crowds, of being aligned with all of the misfits in our town, back in the day. It was galvanising and powerful."

The singer put it another way in January 1992, before *Ten* blew up on radio and MTV, sending Vedder and Pearl Jam into the world with a vengeance. "My upbringing was like a hurricane," he told a UK journalist, "and music was the tree I held onto."

IN THE EARLY 1980s, SEATTLE WAS AS FAR as one could get from the American rock'n'roll mainstream without falling into the Pacific Ocean or over the border into Canada. The city was rich in origin stories – Jimi Hendrix, The Sonics, Ray Charles (he cut his first records there). But the post-punk underground was small enough to fit in a coffee shop. "A couple of dozen musicians," Gossard estimates, and many "didn't know how to play really. If you were lucky to find someone who could play, you were psyched because they made your band sound great."

Gossard, who is Pearl Jam's only Seattle native, likens the city to "a swamp. Something has to sit there for a long time," he explains, "before it turns into nutrients."

This summer, he and Ament will celebrate the 40th anniversary of their first recordings together: a June 1984 demo session as Green River with drummer Alex Vincent, singer Mark Arm and guitarist Steve Turner, the last two later of Mudhoney. Green River's 1985 EP Come On Down is considered the first 'grunge' record, a catchy if unsavoury compliment – it always sounded like something you scrape off your shoe – for a new local brew of hardcore-punk disorder fortified with heavy metal density. Ament and Gossard have been bandmates ever since.

"We have a language that only we understand," says Ament, who moved from Montana to Seattle in 1983 and actually worked in a hip coffee shop, the Raison d'Être, when Green River formed, Gossard joining just out of high school. "Even 30 years ago, we were talking about space, how we have to play less. You listen to Once [the first song on *Ten*] or Blood [on *Vs*] – Stone's riff is super-busy, a lot going on. It was my job to find the simple melody in there that Ed is going to be able to sing over."

Gossard and McCready go back even further. The guitarists (the latter born in Pensacola, Florida, raised in Seattle) have been friends since fifth grade. McCready got a head start on the instrument; he had a band, Shadow, in his early teens. But the two were a natural axis when the time came: Gossard's hard-rock austerity, like Led Zeppelin playing the Wire songbook, scorched with McCready's flammable virtuosity, a blues-with-wah-wah steeped in Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. McCready had dropped the guitar in defeat after Shadow broke up. When Gossard, reeling from the demise of Mother Love Bone, reached out about getting a new thing going,

GREEN SHOOTS

Green River, the first 'grunge' band, remembered. By DAVID FRICKE.

IF SEATTLE was the explosive heart of rock'n'roll in the 1990s, the city's mutinous pulse in the previous decade was located at Raison d'Être, a coffee house in the Belltown area where the local underground gathered and schemed over espressos.

"It was the best place for me to land from Montana," says Jeff Ament. He got a job there in 1983 and stayed seven years, working "five days a week" while meeting "all of the amazing characters" in the scene and making a pivotal racket, from 1984 to 1988, with Stone Gossard in pioneering lunatics Green River.

Ament had his own punk band Deranged Diction when hardcore scamps Mark Arm and Steve Turner (another Raison d'Être employee) coaxed him to join their new enterprise. "I didn't understand their sarcasm and irony," the bassist confesses. Gossard "was even worse, making fun of me hard. I thought, No way am I going to be in a band with this guy. But Steve wore me down. Stone was the right guy. He made our band heavier."

Gossard and Ament co-wrote three of the six songs on 1985's Come On Down EP, a half-hour of ascetic riffing with crushing-metal delivery (the title track; New God), Arm yelping across the din like the Dead Boys' Stiv Bators in mantra. "Some of our connection," Gossard says of Ament, "was how we knew we were different and saying, Let's do something [with that]." But a supporting tour – America's first taste of Seattle in bloom – was a disaster with most shows cancelled and the band playing for as few as six people (at CBGB in New York).

Guitarist Bruce Fairweather replaced Turner on the 1986 EP, Dry As A Bone, only the second vinyl release on a new Seattle imprint, Sub Pop. That was followed by another cross-country fiasco, half of the dates blown out when the tourbus broke down in California. An October 1987 gig in Los Angeles, opening for Jane's Addiction, was the last straw. Only two of the major label reps filling Ament's guest list turned up. He, Gossard and Fairweather headed for Mother Love Bone although they agreed to finish Green River's only LP, 1988's *Rehab Doll*.

Green River were the first 'grunge' band, if only because Sub Pop said so in 1987 promotional material for Dry As A Bone ("Gritty vocals, roaring Marshall amps, ultra-loose GRUNGE"). Ament was not impressed. "By the time I heard the word, I thought, I did that with Deranged Diction. We're on to something different. I had my grunge phase in 1983."

"I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MARK AND STEVE'S SARCASM. STONE WAS EVEN WORSE." Jeff Ament

Pioneer spirits: Green River, 1987 (clockwise from left) Bruce Fairweather, Jeff Ament, Mark Arm, Stone Gossard, Alex Vincent.

Shifting currents: Pearl Jam in Seattle, 2009 (from left) McCready, Gossard, Ament, Vedder, Cameron.

"The perception of Ed was, 'He's an outsider.' My so-called friends were kind of dicks to him." MIKE McCREADY

McCready advised Gossard to call Ament.

"We had that bond," McCready declares gratefully. "When Ed came from San Diego, the first time we all got in a room, I was so excited. He had a great voice, this great feeling to him." But Seattle in 1990 – even in renaissance with Nirvana, Alice In Chains, Soundgarden and Sub Pop Records on the verge of widespread havoc – was "very small, very provincial. The perception of Ed was, 'He's an outsider.' My so-called friends were kind of dicks to him.

"I got pissed," McCready adds, still irritated. "I was like, 'Ed's a great guy. Just listen to him.'"

"IT WAS DARK AND RAINY, BUT IT WAS green," Vedder says of the day he landed in Seattle with one bag, a guitar and a shot at getting in a band with three guys he'd never met. "It was very different from San Diego – sitting in a tiny security booth, running a gas station."

Born Edward Severson in Evanston, Illinois, the singer took his mother's maiden name over the course of an adolescence strained by divorce, shuttles between California and the Midwest and serial disappointment with small-time bands that ended when a friend from the local basketball court, ex-Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Jack Irons, passed on a demo of instrumentals from Ament and Gossard. Irons had declined an offer to join their new band. Vedder wrote lyrics to the music, taped vocals over the tracks and sent the demo back to Seattle.

The singer soon followed, picked up at the airport by Gossard in his Volkswagen. "The one thing I asked," Vedder says, "was, Can we go right to practice? No hang – I wanted to get right to the music. They were kind enough to do that."

The audition was more awkward, Vedder's first taste of Seattle indie rock diffidence. "I remember after I did my best to sing the shit out of a song," he says, "Jeff and Stone would talk to Dave Krusen behind the kit about a tempo thing or a mike thing. I'd go, What about me? What about me? 'Yeah, just keep doing what you're doing.' I felt like I was hanging by a thread, needing some confidence: 'Oh, my God, that's incredible.' None of that. 'Let's do it again but bump it up two beats per minute.' I hung in there. And weird magic started to happen."

Here's a fun fact Ament shared at the Troubadour preview for *Dark Matter*: On October 20, 1990, the day Watt, their producer and superfan, was born in New York City, Pearl Jam wrote Release – Vedder singing "stream of consciousness", as he puts it, while the band played, recording on a Sony Walkman. "It's amazing to watch him work," Gossard says today, "which is fast and meticulous. It's not just having a poem and putting a melody to it. There is a psychic energy that makes it come to life." Vedder is "uniquely talented in his ability to be sensitive, thoughtful and visceral."

Vedder recalls another day at rehearsal, after he moved to Seattle for good, when he went to put quarters in the parking meter, tried to go back inside and found he was locked out. Since this was Seattle, it was raining. And because the band was playing so loud, in Pearl Jam's basement space, no one heard Vedder pounding on the door. "The only thing I could hear," Vedder says, "coming through the window was the bass. I just sat there," in the rain, "and wrote."

When the music stopped, "I really pounded on the door," he continues. "They came up and let me in. I said, Roll that thing again. And that was the song" – Oceans, a meditation on rising ➢

Danny Clinch, Charles Peterson

BEYOND THE GRUNGE

Pearl Jam's immediate contemporaries, and their fates, by CLIVE PRIOR.

MUDHONEY

Gossard and Ament's Green River bandmates held a torch for punk and chaos and their own musical path even during their regulation major label dalliance. Mainman Mark Arm survived heroin, still works at Seattle lode star label, Sub Pop.

Key album: *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge* (SUB POP, 1991)

Status: Extant. Last year's *Plastic Eternity* was their 11th studio album

SOUNDGARDEN

Masters of epic, inventive hard rock fired by Chris Cornell's Plantian pipes and Kim Thayil's art-metal riffs, the early-doors North-west pace-setters remain arguably underrated despite the vast success of 1994's *Superunknown*.

Key album: *Badmotorfinger* (A&M, 1991)

Status: Defunct since Cornell's shock 2017 suicide

MELVINS

For the extent of mid-'90s major label grunge fever, look no further than the ultra-sludgy Seattle scene godfathers' four albums on Atlantic. Their hardcore-filtered Sabs-riffing, and mainman King Buzzo's fright 'fro abide. The Seattle bands' Seattle band.

Key album: *Stoner Witch* (ATLANTIC, 1994)

Status: Still releasing the best-titled albums in rock (cf. *Freak Puke, Everybody Loves Sausages…*)

TAD

When Thomas A Doyle's monster riff machine toured the UK in late 1989, they alternated headline slots with Nirvana. Yet their febrile backwoods comic-horror made them, with Melvins, the equal-least compatible major label transplants. Live, they never disappointed.

Key Album: *8-Way Santa* (SUB POP, 1991)

Status: Split in 1999; re-formed partially for Sub Pop's 25th Anniversary gig in Seattle, 2013

NIRVANA

Outliers on the Seattle scene – from unfashionable Aberdeen; harbouring, under the scree, pop smarts – who exploded into that rare modern phenomenon: a band as great as they were big. Having a generational songwriting talent in Kurt Cobain didn't hurt.

Key Album: *Nevermind* (GEFFEN, 1991)

Status: RIP

SCREAMING TREES

Neo-psychedelic rockers from Ellensburg, WA, uplifted by Mark Lanegan's stentorian baritone, but destabilised by his drug problems and eventual disenchantment, not to mention the eccentricities of the burly Conner brothers on guitar and bass.

Key Album: *Sweet Oblivion* (EPIC, 1992)

Status: Split in 2000; Lanegan passed in 2022; Van Conner in 2023

L7

Charismatic, dynamic, provocative and tuneful all-female quartet from LA drawn into the Sub Pop circle before inevitable major label transfer plus Butch Vig twiddling on '92's *Bricks Are Heavy*. Much more than 'that Reading Festival tampon band'.

Key Album: *Smell The Magic* (SUB POP, 1990)

Status: The classic line-up re-formed in 2014

SMASHING PUMPKINS

Founded in Chicago in 1988 on the talent and ego of Billy Corgan. The variety of their songs and sonics made the 'grunge' label inapt – although most of these bands could say the same. Their drug casualty, drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, is alive and well.

Key Album: *Siamese Dream* (HUT, 1993)

Status: Touring with Green Day in the US, July-Sept. Headline a UK tour in June

HOLE

Audited without prejudice, there's plenty to value in the bruised art-punk of Hole's first two LPs and the burnished pop-rock of their third. But will Courtney Love be forgiven for surviving her husband, Kurt Cobain? Maybe one day.

Key Album: *Live Through This* (DGC, 1994)

Status: On hiatus

ALICE IN CHAINS

The most metal of grunge's Premier League, AIC leapt straight to a major and almost instant success, interrupted from 1996 by sandpaper-voiced singer Layne Staley's worsening addictions. He overdosed on a speedball in 2002, aged 34.

Key Album: *Dirt* (COLUMBIA, 1992)

Status: Soldiering on, with vocalist William DuVall

BABES IN TOYLAND

Formed in Minneapolis but Seattle-integrated. Courtney Love copped moves (perhaps lyrics) from Babes' Kat Bjelland, though no-one matched Bjelland's blood-curdling roar. After '95, the group foundered, followed by squabbles over the name.

Key Album: *Fontanelle* (REPRISE, 1992)

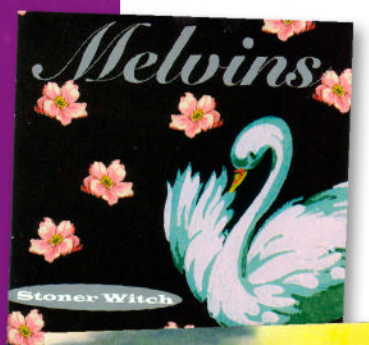
Status: Re-formed in 2014; re-split in 2017

STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

Oft-pilloried as Alice In Chains Lite, San Diego's STP edged closer to Soundgarden and Pearl Jam as they rose to their Brendan O'Brien-produced peak, later undermined by singer Scott Weiland's drug habits. He died of an overdose in 2015.

Key Album: *Purple* (ATLANTIC, 1994)

Status: Still going, with American X Factor singer Jeff Gutt



waters and riding the tide home. Vedder, a surfer, wrote the melody to Ament's bass "because that's all I could hear through the window."

As their new band was busy being born, Ament, Gossard and McCready made *Temple Of The Dog* with Cornell and Cameron over two weeks in November and December 1990, between Pearl Jam rehearsals, building on two songs – Say Hello 2 Heaven and the epic, metallic grind of Reach Down – Cornell wrote in pained response to Wood's death. The singers were friends and, for a time, roommates. Cornell and Vedder were close in another way. The Soundgarden vocalist "helped Ed integrate into the scene," McCready says, "took him out for beers, talked to him. He was very engaging when he didn't have to be."

Vedder and Cornell actually met at a *Temple* session – the day Cornell came in with Hunger Strike. The song "was just one verse and a chorus that spun around on itself," Cornell told me in 2016. There was no demo. Cornell sang what he had, "the low parts and high parts, almost call and response", until Vedder – sitting in the corner, hanging back respectfully – "jumped up and started singing the low part." Suddenly, Hunger Strike was "a real song".

That duet – with a dramatic, overlapping exchange of the phrase "Goin' hungry" as Vedder's deep yearning underscored Cornell's alpine wail against the band's mounting power-chord force – was Vedder's official debut on record when *Temple Of The Dog* was issued in April 1991, four months before *Ten* and five before Nirvana's rocket, *Nevermind*.

"Eddie was in the background – I didn't really notice him at all," Cameron admits, "until I heard the playback of Hunger Strike. I'm like, Holy fuck, who is this kid? There were certain guys in my generation that had 'it', the full package – charisma, extreme talent, extreme individuality." Vedder was "one of those swans, much like Chris – a special breed."

Ament says he knew right away, within Vedder's first days in Seattle, "that I wanted to be in a band with him. The way it was coming out, the commitment, the words – he was the singer for me. It wasn't even like I was able to write down why. It was a feeling I had in the room with him, Stone and Mike. I knew it was real – ultimately all that we were after."

ON MAY 30, 1992, NINE MONTHS after its release, *Ten* reached the Top 10 on Billboard's album chart, a slow-boil reward for Pearl Jam's already relentless touring and FM radio's gradual embrace of the first two singles, Alive and Even Flow. On July 18, the second Lollapalooza tour opened at the Shoreline Amphitheatre

Kevin Westenberg, Lance Mercer (2), Ebet Roberts/Getty

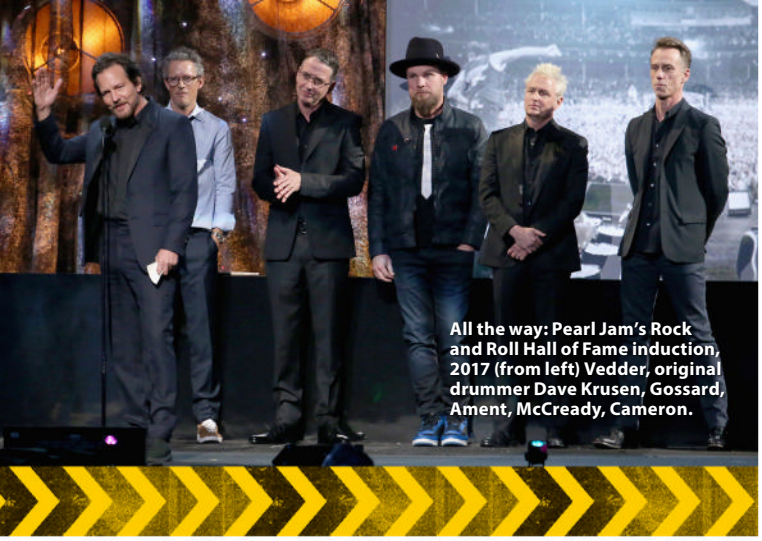
"I felt more understood by *Quadrophenia* than by teachers, family or peers."

EDDIE VEDDER

See my friends: (right) Vedder and Ament do Lollapalooza at Kitsap County Fairgrounds, Bremerton, WA, July 22, 1992; (above, from left) Vedder with L7's Donita Sparks and Dee Plakas, plus Dee's husband Lance, at Rock For Choice, Pensacola, FL, March 9, 1994; Vedder and Soundgarden's Chris Cornell, Bremerton, WA, 1992; Pete Townshend and Vedder, 1999.

near San Francisco, headlined by the Red Hot Chili Peppers with support muscle from Ministry, Ice Cube and Soundgarden. Pearl Jam – with drummer Dave Abbruzzese, who replaced Krusen after the recording of *Ten* – played a 45-minute set in daylight, listed on the tour poster only above the British band Lush and a promise of "Concourse Oddities and Curiosities"

By August 22, when Lollapalooza pulled into Miami, *Ten* was at Number 2, staying there for a month (blocked from going all the way by country singer Billy Ray Cyrus), while *Temple Of The Dog* was headed to the Top 5. Pearl Jam ultimately played almost 200 shows in 1991 and '92 including a handful under their first name, Mookie Blaylock, briefly borrowed from a basketball player then with the New Jersey Nets. In February 1993, *Ten* (Blaylock's shirt number) outsold *Nevermind* in the US. ➢



All the way: Pearl Jam's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, 2017 (from left) Vedder, original drummer Dave Krusen, Gossard, Ament, McCready, Cameron.

Kevin Kane/Getty

"It was fun to watch the crowd reaction when Pearl Jam came on-stage. Everything was bubbling."

MATT CAMERON

"It was fun to watch the crowd reaction when Pearl Jam came on-stage," says Cameron, who saw their daily march to phenomenon on Lollapalooza. "Everything was bubbling, getting bigger throughout the tour. With Soundgarden, we were still slugging it out. But Pearl Jam had immediate success. We could see that in real time."

Lollapalooza was, in effect, *Ten*'s cover come to life: Lance Mercer's photograph of the band in tepee-like formation, hands clasped at the top pointing skyward. It's "a little hokey", Ament says, although to be fair, it was the bassist's first time out as his group's art director.

"But that's how I was feeling," he asserts, "that the only way this was going to be great was if we believe in each other, everybody working hard and trying to make it the best it can be. I felt like I had a late start" – Ament was 28, the oldest member, when *Ten* was released – "so I just wanted to play, make T-shirts and records, with guys who wanted to work as hard as I did."

Yet the bassist considered leaving Pearl Jam a few years later, during the making of *No Code*, because, he said in 2003, "it was kind of Ed's band." When I brought that up to Vedder during an interview that year for Rolling Stone, the singer laughed, mostly at himself. "You know, I just heard that," he replied. "I didn't feel that way, but that's typical of a control freak.

"What I might have been guilty of," Vedder went on, "is feeling that I got more criticism than anyone else in the group, because I was the face put on it" – literally in the case of the October 25, 1993 issue of Time magazine with the headline "All the Rage", despite Vedder and Cobain's agreement not to speak to the publication for the story. "The hype of that time, of Seattle music – it had tangible effects on everyone's lives, Kurt being the most extreme example… But that was a lot to cope with. I was freaked out."

Pearl Jam reacted by going weird (*No Code*, the first of two albums with Irons), pulling back (no videos) and taking on the concert juggernaut Ticketmaster over service fees added to the face value of admission, a battle that included a 1995 tour of non-Ticketmaster venues (a logistical nightmare) and a Justice Department probe that got the band a Congressional hearing and little else. "We were still trying to figure out who we are as people," Vedder says, citing his *No Code* road song Off He Goes, a country-noir ballad with more than a dash of mid-'70s Neil Young about "what it would be like to be *my* friend and having sympathy for that."

McCready recalls that during the recording of *Vs*, producer Brendan O'Brien told Pearl Jam that one of Vedder's songs for the album, Better Man, a stormy portrait of exhausted, unrequited love written by the singer in high school, was a certain hit: "That immediately made us not record it." Pearl Jam returned to Better Man for *Vitalogy* but didn't put it out as a single. It was a Top 20 airplay hit anyway.

"I was partying a lot then," McCready confesses, "out of control [with] alcohol and drugs. Luckily, those guys hung on to me." But "there was a point when Ed was doing pirate radio from his van [Self Pollution Radio], very distant from us, while we were flying in planes. It was a tumultuous time. I thought it was going to end."

It didn't. Side-projects helped, among them Gossard's Loosegroove label, launched in 1996; Ament's two fine '90s albums with Three Fish; and McCready's turn with Layne Staley in Mad Season. (Vedder released his first solo album, *Into The Wild*, the soundtrack to a Sean Penn film, in 2007.) But Pearl Jam had two of their biggest singles, Given To Fly from *Yield* and 1999's Last Kiss – a 1964 teenage-death ballad by J Frank Wilson And The Cavaliers, covered at a soundcheck and first put out on a fan-club disc – after grunge breathed its last.

"At dozens of times over the last 30 years, all of us have wanted to do things that one or more of us didn't want to do," Ament says. "But the thing you figure out is that the more open you are, the more vulnerable you are, the more connected you feel."

THEN CAME ROSKILDE. ON JUNE 30, 2000, AS PEARL Jam were finishing the *Vs* song Daughter during a headlining set at the legendary Danish rock festival, the crush of fans in the moshpit and the wet, slippery ground underneath (from heavy rain that day) turned into tragedy: nine deaths, all young men in their teens and twenties. Early the next morning, the band issued a statement, attempting to express the unspeakable. It was signed, "Devastated, Pearl Jam."

"We came together as close as we could," Vedder told me, looking back in 2003. "Stone was ready to close up shop. And I thought that if anyone ever lost their lives at one of our shows, that would be it. I would never play again."

But a month later, on August 3, Pearl Jam took the stage in Virginia Beach, Virginia, beginning – as they had in Fairfax in 1994 – with a song that spoke to the moment, a hurt too big to comprehend on a night for starting over. Long Road was recorded by Vedder with the Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan for the 1996 film Dead Man Walking and again on the Merkin Ball EP, a Pearl Jam collaboration with Neil Young. "I have wished for so long," Vedder sang that night, in the cool, bracing air, "How I wish for you today."

"You're right about that song," McCready says, vividly remembering that show and Vedder's powerful choice for the opening hymn. "That's what I've always loved about Ed's lyrics. It can be this very dark thing, and he will have some solution to it, an emotional hopefulness in the face of adversity. Instead of saying, 'This is all fucked up,' and that's it, he says, 'How do we stay positive? How do we find the answer? How do we not fade?'"

The guitarist is alluding to *Dark Matter*'s finale, a quiet walk through twilight called Setting Sun which ends with Vedder offering a choice, then a wish: "We could become one last setting sun/Or be the sun at the break of dawn/Let us not fade." The plural could be about family or nation. It certainly fits his band, halfway through its fourth decade and facing forward with the original sound and mission riding shotgun.

"The older you get, the better you get at living in the present," Vedder affirms. "The understanding that you have less time is the biggest number in the quotient. The goal is to keep making music. It's your passion, your special purpose."

At this stage in a career, in life, "You lean on the relationships with the people who are still around," he says. "It really hits you when you are in a situation where that person would be there. And you're sad for them that they're not. But it makes you realise that you gotta be healthy. You want to be around for your kids. You want to make good records.

"And," Vedder adds brightly, "we might have one or two left."

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

"Judee Sill overdosed in 1979 at the age of 35, her life a black box of questions for the generations that steadily discovered her music's power and charm."

GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN ADMIRES THE GENIUS OF JUDEE SILL. SCREEN P108.

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Every breath you take

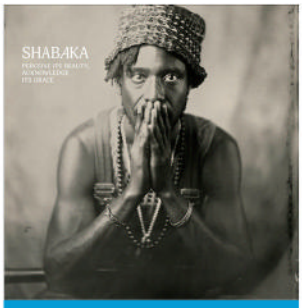
A jazz colossus breathes new life into the New Age.
By John Mulvey. Illustration by Chris Nurse.

Shabaka

★★★★

Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace

IMPULSE. CD/DL/LP



"Shabaka Hutchings is striving for a greater physical and spiritual self-knowledge."

THE LEADING British saxophonist of his generation retired, after a fashion, on December 7, 2023. That night Shabaka Hutchings, on the cusp of 40, played what he promised would be his last gig on the instrument, performing John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* at London's ICA. Hutchings' valedictory run had lasted nearly 12 months, ever since he announced on New Year's Day he'd be abandoning the saxophone. There would be farewell shows for his Sons Of Kemet band and, on September 23 in Hollywood, an evening when Hutchings took on another auspicious repertoire – that of Pharoah Sanders – to re-imagine *Promises* alongside Floating Points.

Hutchings' decision to put down what he calls "the big metal horn", and pick up a selection of wooden and bamboo flutes – the Japanese shakuhachi, the Andean quena, the Slavic svirel, the Brazilian pífano – looks like a pretty esoteric one. After all, Hutchings has spent the past decade at the forefront of a British jazz explosion, an activist with a dynamic style that made his music accessible to a crowd much broader than the usual jazz cabal.

Hutchings, though, has always been simultaneously an uncompromising free spirit and a canny populariser. And so it is that *Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace*, his first solo album proper, turns out to be as serendipitous a career swerve as it is a strange one. *Perceive Its Beauty…* is a delicate, inward-facing set, mostly recorded in 2022 at the historic Van Gelder Studios in New Jersey, where the most prominent sounds are all those flutes, a couple of duelling harps, and a selection of vocalists adding ululatory shade. If it initially seems niche, it's also very much of the moment, tapping into a scene where jazz meets a revitalised New Age aesthetic. *Promises*, the Floating Points and Pharoah Sanders album that was MOJO's Album Of The Year in 2021, is one loose reference point. André 3000's *New Blue Sun*, the 2023 record that kicked off what we could now optimistically call an ambient jazz flute boom, is another.

André 3000 and Sam 'Floating Points' Shepherd both figure on I'll Do Whatever You Want, an elegantly multi-faceted piece that sits in the middle of *Perceive Its Beauty…*. Shepherd provides a gently undulating soundbed of analogue synth, over which Hutchings – on shakuhachi, possibly one he made himself in Japan – goes head to head with the former Outkast frontman, here playing something which the credits helpfully identify as a Teotihuacan drone flute. After around four minutes, a subtly needling guitar line from Dave Okumu enters the mix, densening and intensifying. A minute later, a couple more notable guests arrive in the shape of Esperanza Spalding on bass, and the New Age pioneer Laraaji, on characteristically ecstatic yodels and giggles. On paper, it appears cluttered, ostentatious, an attempt to pack as many hip names as possible into seven and a half minutes. In practice, it works beautifully; a harmonious, intuitive jam far lighter than the sum of its parts.

Such is the way of *Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace*, a collaboration that feeds off the energies of the musicians while avoiding the powerplays that sometimes come with improvised music. There are older jazz precedents than Floating Points and André 3000, of course – the questing spirit and global eclecticism of Don Cherry circa *Brown Rice* (1975) being an obvious one. The filigreed mix of Brandee Younger and Charles Overton's harps and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson's strings on As The Planets And The Stars Collapse, meanwhile, are strongly reminiscent of Alice Coltrane's 1972 orchestral pivot, *World Galaxy*.

Hutchings, though, refers to Björk's *Vespertine*, Antony And The Johnsons' *The Crying Light* and, especially, Joanna Newsom as critical inspirations. You can hear how Newsom's *Ys* is one of his favourite albums on Living, a rococo trinket with faint Renaissance Faire vibes where soul singer Eska assumes the trilling Newsom role over the harps, strings and – again, we're indebted to the sleevenotes here – Hutchings' whimsically parping svirei.

Music as determinedly pretty as this might be quite a shock if you've previously loved the ferocity of Hutchings' music. "The way I was playing the saxophone in the past inspired that kind of intensity," he tells MOJO, "because I was just blowing more air down the instrument and hyping myself up. Which is cool. There's a need for that, but I feel like there's a need for all expressions of the emotional landscape."

Hence *Perceive Its Beauty…* takes its cues from the title of the 2022 EP that presaged Hutchings' shift, Black Meditation. If his saxophone playing was often confrontational, staccato, his flute-playing is more introspective and fluid, a musical practice not dissimilar to a mindfulness of breathing exercise. "Holy wood burning, breathing deeper," incants the New York rapper Elucid on the superb Body To Inhabit, revisiting one of his verses from the album he made last year as half of Armand Hammer, *We Buy Diabetic Test Strips*. Another rapper, Saul Williams, makes the concept even more explicit on a track called Managing My Breath, What Fear Had Become. "What it would actually mean to speak inwardly instead of outwardly," Williams' poem articulates, "To manage my breath."

This, then, appears to be Hutchings' mission on *Perceive Its Beauty…*: to transcend what he has become renowned for, and to strive for a greater physical and spiritual self-knowledge – albeit one which depends on creative teamwork rather than solipsism, and which never excludes the listener. It's a personal musical narrative that starts with Hutchings playing the clarinet – his first instrument – and ends with the stirring poetry of his father, Anum Iyapo. And it's one unafraid of past lives: three minutes and 22 seconds into Breathing, Hutchings temporarily drops his flutes and clarinet, and returns to his saxophone for one last exhalation of fire. The tools change, the air moves in different ways, the vision evolves; and one of our finest musicians might just have achieved a higher state of artistic consciousness.

BACK STORY: DAD ROCKERS

● Many notable vocalists including Moses Sumney and Lianne La Havas appear on *Perceive Its Beauty…*, but one name is less familiar: Anum Iyapo (above), who contributes a rousing poem to the closing Song Of The Motherland. Iyapo, it transpires, is actually Hutchings' father, a graphic designer who worked on album sleeves for the likes of King Tubby and Jah Shaka, and a writer who recorded a reggae poetry album, also titled *Song Of The Motherland*, in 1985. Hutchings "hoodwinked" Iyapo into revisiting that poem for his new record – "Real stars-aligning stuff," he says. The original *Song Of The Motherland* will be reissued on Hutchings' Native Rebel recordings label on May 25.

SHABAKA SPEAKS! HUTCHINGS EXPLAINS HIS SAX-TO-FLUTE SWITCH

Come fly with him: Shabaka Hutchings prepares to toot his flute for you.

"It's like the ghost of the saxophone."

Shabaka Hutchings speaks to John Mulvey.

You said farewell to the saxophone with quite a bang, taking on John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders' repertoire at two gigs in late 2023. How did you feel after those shows?

"It's weird when you come to the end of something musically, it forces you to sharpen up. The last three Sons Of Kemet gigs we did a year ago were three of the greatest gigs of my whole career, and the Coltrane and Pharoah gigs were strong on the heels of that. There's something about knowing this is it – there's no room for manoeuvre, it's your chance to make your statement. Because it was in the service of Coltrane and Pharoah, it felt like I was taking on some of their spirit for those performances in a way that shouldn't be replicated, in a way that was more reverential."

An obsession with flutes and the global connections between different flute traditions seems to be critical to this record.

"Yeah, exactly. When I got into the studio to lay the foundations down [in May 2022], the only objective was to see how these various flutes responded to the musicians I'd brought into the room. At the start of 2022 I decided that in two years I'd be putting down the sax, bringing the bands to a close and starting the whole flute thing. Which was audacious, because I wasn't particularly good at the flute at that time – a year and a half after recording, I'm much better. But all I could do was try to be creative with what I could do. And I think that's the key to creativity, actually – seeing what you can do with limited resources. Sometimes being too proficient at your instrument creates a situation where you don't have to force yourself to be legitimately creative."

Is there any connection between the idea of meditative breathing and the breath-work required for different instrument playing?

"That's a really important part of my practice with the flutes. It's watching how I progress through the course of one breath; how I come from silence to the full expression of the note, and then back down to nothing. My constant battle with the flutes is to try and avoid making them an extension of what I was doing on the saxophone. The music I'd been making with the saxophone and in the bands was the ultimate exposition of speaking outwardly. But then there's an inner voice that tells me what needs to happen is a change in texture, a change in emotional landscape or sonic landscape."

What made you include that last furious saxophone solo on Breathing?

"(*Laughs*) I just thought it'd be funny. When we recorded I was still playing the saxophone, and I thought it'd be like a voice from the past popping up, like the ghost of the saxophone introducing itself. I put those flutes at the end of it as something whimsical taking the sax away."

Marcus King

★★★★

Mood Swings

AMERICAN/SNAKEFARM. CD/DL/LP

South Carolinian guitarist finds his inner soul man on cathartic third album.

Mood Swings begins with two spoken fragments: a brief discourse on the "terrible hopelessness" of depression and a message for a loved one on an answerphone. Both help give the rest of the album an intimate, conversational feel. King's mental health issues informed his previous solo releases, 2022's Dan Auerbach-assisted *Young Blood* and 2020's *El Dorado*, but his boy-genius guitar heroics often disguised the lyrical anguish. Here, new producer Rick Rubin has dialled down the guitars and put the now 26-year-old and recently married King's voice and struggles centre-stage. The self-lacerating Fuck Up My Life Again and Bipolar Love are certainly on the nose, but the likes of Delilah and This Far Gone offer hope and optimism with King's plangent Curtis Mayfield-style tones floating over graceful piano and gospel backing vocals. Three albums in, and King is still full of surprises.

Mark Blake

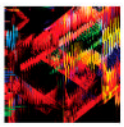
Ride

★★★★

Interplay

WICHITA. CD/DL/LP

Early-'90s shoegaze quartet's third reunion era LP; a majestic FX-fest.



It's been an exemplary reunion: since 2015 Ride have plugged right back into their four-way chemistry, dropped two fine records whose clutch of songs would enrich any hits set, and matured lyrically from youthful escapism into political anger and existential worry. Better yet, they're still evolving, as *Interplay* expands their palette beyond mere feedback to an aural opulence textured with synths and artful guitar FX, inspired, apparently, by Tears For Fears – an influence they might once have deemed too uncool. In truth, Last Frontier, with its high-tech wall-of-sound and dazed Andy Bell vocal, more audibly channels New Order's *Republic*, while opener Peace Sign, for all its thematic *Seeds Of Love* neo-hippy-isms, boasts a high-tempo motorik and thrilling lead-guitar tingle that's quintessential Ride. Later on, Mark Gardener-sung broadsides rip into prescription drugs (Monaco), courtroom destruction (Portland Rocks) and music-biz greed (Sunrise Chaser), but with a winning mood of defiance. Overall: troubled, unflinching, but tuneful and triumphant.

Andrew Perry

The Dandy Warhols

★★★

Rockmaker

SUNSET BLVD. CD/DL/LP

Slash, Debbie Harry and Frank Black show, but, what, no Anton Newcombe?

Two decades have passed since The Dandy Warhols last released something on a major label, and it's been a quarter-century since they got wild in that Bohemian Like You video. But they slip into glitter and strut around like stars on their twelfth album, a rambunctious rock record with gnarled guitars, unexpected industrial flourishes and loads of lyrics about maintaining a lascivious lifestyle of hook-ups and high times. They conjure Lou Reed while contemplating civil unrest during The Summer Of Hate, suggest Rob Zombie's slasher jams during The Cross, and get caustic during the noise-streaked Danzig With Myself. If the guitar sounds familiar on that last cut, it's Frank Black, who joins Debbie Harry and Slash as guests. Their parts are sharp, especially Harry's theatrical turn for the finale. But if they suggest a motley crew, that holds for the record, too; a sometimes fun but ultimately unfocused lot from a band who've been just that for 30 years.

Grayson Haver Currin

Bodega

★★★

Our Brand Could Be Yr Life

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL/LP

Brooklyn indie-rockers aim at corporate doublespeak and internet dandies.

Written eight years ago, shelved, rewritten and now re-recorded, Bodega's long-gestating third LP is a sardonic, self-aware treatise on corporate culture's corruption of all that it touches. Thankfully, this message is delivered with wit and indie-rock attack, melding the machine-tooled precision of early Strokes, the ragged tunefulness of Guided By Voices and the acid bite of The Van Pelt. Between AI-generated voices urging listeners to "curate your personal brand", the group take aim at the deadening effect of copywriting (Tarkovski), the need for bands to "have so many things to sell you" (Bodega Bait) and the conspicuous tastefulness of some online music fans (Cultural Consumer). Unsubtle but often archly funny, this commentary goes down easier thanks to a melodically complex tunefulness that consistently serves up gems like the Outdoor Miner-channelling Major Amberson and the gauzy Anglophile loveliness of Webster Hall.

Stevie Chick

Pearl Jam

★★★★

Dark Matter

REPUBLIC. CD/DL/LP

Seattle giants' twelfth LP hits like a triple espresso.

First Iggy, Ozzy and The Rolling Stones: now Pearl Jam are the latest rock institution to plug into erstwhile Justin Bieber producer Andrew Watt, a younger dude adept at refurbishing old school for the earbud generation. That *Dark Matter* succeeds so well is due to the band focusing their creative energy, just as Watt's sonic Nutribullet technique condenses PJ's core rumble into punchy blasts. "We used to dance, we had our own scene," hollers Eddie Vedder on opener Scared Of Fear, its taut-rocking meld of The Wipers and Big Star setting a tone for the manic melancholy that surges throughout these 11 songs. Wreckage finds them "surrounded by the remnants", a Tom Petty-styled reckoning with life, blessed with rueful harmony and hard-earned wisdom, while Got To Give is Pearl Jam's latest and maybe greatest hymn to people power. "I'll be the last one standing," Vedder affirms. On this form, anything's possible.

Keith Cameron

Marcus King: he's still full of surprises.

Atribaphoto

Through the looking-glass: Jane Weaver goes in search of different angles.

Nic Chapman

Lingua franca

With her twelfth album, the Widnes kosmonaut keeps making her own scene. By **Victoria Segal.**

Jane Weaver

★★★★

Love In Constant Spectacle

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

IN 2019, Jane Weaver united with collaborators Peter Philipson and Raz Ullah under the name Fenella, creating a new score for cult Hungarian animation Fehérlófia ('Son Of The White Mare'), Marcell Jankovics' 1981 reimagining of ancient dragon-infested legend. While 2021's *Flock* was a concerted pop effort, Weaver's new record, *Love In Constant Spectacle*, returns to the intriguing dislocations of working in an unfamiliar language, inspired by the glancing near-misses of film subtitles. These songs aren't so much about what's lost in translation, though, as what might be found there: fresh meanings, different angles, new light.

It's an approach that fits with her solo career, now deep into its second decade. From Weaver's early acid-folk recordings to the star-seeking voyages of 2014's *The Silver Globe* and 2017's *Modern Kosmology*, there's a desire to take things apart, see beyond the four-square nuts and bolts, the correct grammar. In a 2022 interview, Weaver described herself as a "massive studio geek" – "when somebody presents me with a really weird old synth or loads of strange outboard gear, I instantly want to know how it works and what I can do with it." This might be the first time that Weaver has entrusted production of her records to somebody else (a risk vastly diminished when somebody else is John Parish) but it remains very much on-brand – there's a track here called Emotional Components. Music, language, feelings: in Weaver's world, they can all be broken down and instructively – if curiously – rebuilt.

As a result, *Love In Constant Spectacle* can initially be opaque, difficult to read. The title track's tigerish electropop comes closest to *Flock*'s more explicit pop moments – those touches of slo-mo Kylie or Goldfrapp disco – but elsewhere, these songs bleed a little around the edges, their LCD display slightly blotched and leaky. Interesting shapes result: there's a spreading patch of Can-like darkness across The Axis And The Seed; Stereolab and Broadcast fuzz the pixels of Perfect Storm and Happiness In Proximity, while Motif takes an unexpected Elliott Smith form ("Don't try to be the light/See the light").

"There's nothing to shout about or declare," sings Weaver on the Juxtapozed With U flow of Emotional Components, and it's true that these songs unfold under tight control, the *Another Green World* shuffle of Univers or Family Of The Sun's medieval groove only gradually loosening the ropes, pulling down the cosmic levers, gathering towards a revelation. Despite the title, *Love In Constant Spectacle* is watchful rather than showy, its songs not boxing up one simple mood at a time but sitting with their uncertainty. Nuance might be going out of fashion in the world outside, but in here, Weaver speaks it fluently.

Quiet apocalypse: Matthew Houck can see clearly now.

Visionary thing

Nashville-based singer-songwriter draws the veil further back on eighth album. By Victoria Segal.

Phosphorescent

★★★★

Revelator

VERVE/DECCA. CD/DL/LP

MATTHEW HOUCK isn't one for moving fast. It's not just his release schedule where he maintains a careful pace, measuring out five years or so between records. Even at his speediest – New Birth In New England from 2018's *C'est La Vie*, for example – he tends to keep his music steady, his delivery unrushed, pedal steel and backing vocals holding his songs tight. *Here's To Taking It Easy*, as the title of Phosphorescent's 2010 album put it.

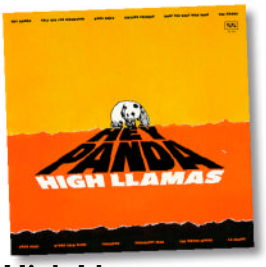
Here's to a sense of false security, too, though. *Revelator* might have been recorded in Houck's Nashville studio, but that's about the only safe space here. As that biblically stringent title suggests, these songs are quietly apocalyptic on both personal and universal fronts, an attempt to cut through the distracting, comforting static of life and see what's really going on.

For all the hesitant second-guessing of Houck's phrasing, the title track is brutal: "How can I get it right?/I don't even like what I write," he sings over Jim White's softly disruptive drums, "I don't even like what I like any more." Time is an implacable enemy, described on Wide As Heaven as a "Raven with a beak of blood/Crying at seven every morning", while the country-roads Street Hassle of Impossible House prods at both the wonders and fragilities of domesticity (extra points for the Home Alone reference).

Out in the wider world, things aren't easier: A Moon Behind The Clouds' Sweet Jane chug illuminates "a country on fire", while The World Is Ending, beautifully written by Houck's partner, the Australian singer-songwriter Jo Schornikow, couldn't be more explicit, a gentle unfurling of existential dread. Never showy or histrionic, Houck is also subtly playful: the surprisingly deep A Poem On The Men's Room Wall, bringing Phyllis Diller back into 21st century discourse, has the lightly worn wisdom of *Nixon*-era Lambchop.

If Phosphorescent have sometimes struggled to establish a sharp-edged identity, that care and delicacy is one of Houck's core values: what might be a bleak set of songs about fragile ecosystems and unsustainable lives is saved from desperation by the warmth of the instrumentation – strings, synths, piano – and the watchful humanity of the lyrics.

Mindfulness suggests colouring books and resignation implies inertia, but Houck seems to deal in a kind of radical acceptance. "Leafy trees and empty trees/They're all the same," he declares on the unpaved country sway of All The Same, sounding less like the expression of a pancake-flat affect, more like the acknowledgement that there's a picture so big you can't even see the frame. "To get it right is hard to do," sings Houck over a thunderclap of keyboards as the album closes. Like the rest of *Revelator*, it has the ring of truth.



High Llamas

★★★★

Hey Panda

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Classic pop experimentalists sail way over the horizon.

With one foot in the classic '60s pop of The Beach Boys and Van Dyke Parks, and the other leading him down ever-more experimental avenues, High Llama-in-chief Sean O'Hagan hasn't always got the balance right. Sometimes his work with others, either producing or co-writing, has drawn out the best in him, but *Hey Panda* just about burns with the right mixture. The endless avant-grade touches – bleating sheep, handbells, struck piano strings, massive Auto-Tune oscillations, the list goes on – never overwhelm O'Hagan's love of simple melody. His influences have always shifted like sands, too, and *Hey Panda* is strewn with Sault-like reimagining of '80s R&B rhythms on Yoga Goat or Hall & Oates touches in Sisters Friends. *Hey Panda* may seem whimsical at first, but its depth is all the grander for the work it takes to mine its many gems.

Andy Fyfe

BMX Bandits

★★★★

Dreamers On The Run

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

Beauty sleep: C86 outsider artist's troubled ode to joy.

"Not quite right is a fine way to be," sings Duglas T Stewart on My Name Is Duglas, a highlight of the Bard of Bellshill's twelfth LP as the BMX Bandits. A Brian Wilson-style adult child with a bit more of a knowing twinkle, Stewart has been boldly out-feebling The Modern Lovers and the TV Personalities since the mid-1980s in his quest for the purest love song. *Dreamers On The Run* was conceived in 2014 as a collection about living in two worlds: the one of dreams and music, and the rather more oppressive real one outside. Stewart's mental health struggles delayed work, but the finished product distils personal pain into a powerful mix of *Scott 3* and the Care Bears. The title track melds Beach Boys baroque and Steeleye Span minstrelsy, while an unexpected hot jazz interlude enlivens the Bacharach-flavoured Things You Threw Away. Flawed in most of the right ways.

Jim Wirth

Saint Saviour

★★★

Sunseeker

VLF. CD/DL/LP

Bill Ryder-Jones-produced ex-voice of Groove Armada adopts a new optimism.

Sunseeker takes two different approaches. The first instantly surfaces during the two opening cuts: Better Than and A Picture Is All I Have, where acoustic guitar intimacy evokes early Tunng minus the electronic side of their folktronica. Third track Be Gentle takes the other tack: Stereolab at their most pastoral cosy up to mid-period Saint Etienne. Further in, the two aspects coalesce on Gold In The Water. Former Groove Armada singer Becky Jones's previous album as Saint Saviour, 2020's *Tomorrow Again*, was likewise produced by Bill Ryder-Jones, who has been working with her since 2014. Previously, Jones's albums have had a dolefulness, which is now set aside in favour of, well, sunniness. Labelmates Jadu Heart guest, as do Orlando Weeks and Ryder-Jones. Overall, it feels as if a new creative phase hasn't yet fully bedded in.

Kieron Tyler

A Certain Ratio

★★★★

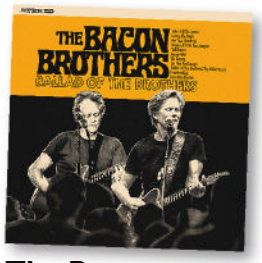
It All Comes Down To This

MUTE. CD/DL/LP

Manchester legend's whipsmart masterclass in live-to-tape punk-funk.

As the title implies, alt-producer Dan Carey lured the Factory Records first-wavers to his south London lair with a view to capturing core trio Jez Kerr (bass, vocals), Martin Moscrop (guitar, synth) and Donald Johnson (drums), in lean, back-to-basics splendour, minus their latterday records' many collaborators. What an excellent idea: ACR's thirteenth LP resembles none of its predecessors, especially not wobbly early efforts like 1981's *To Each…*, as here they're presented as a crisp, razor-edged groove unit, with not a milligram of flab aboard, either instrumentally or melodically. Of the 10 clipped tunes, Keep It Real delivers a punchy "fight the power" message to fearsome perma-breakbeats and judicious whistles, while God Knows could rightfully be the megahit that always eluded them, the chorus weave of synth, guitar and voice as catchy as anything you'll hear this month.

Andrew Perry



The Bacon Brothers

★★★

Ballad Of The Brothers

FORTY BELOW. CD/DL/LP

'Tremors' Kevin and his brother Michael's seventh album.

That Hollywood and rock don't always go hand in hand is hardly a secret, but brothers Kevin and Michael Bacon have always made a better fist of it than most since their 1997 debut. The made-up title of that album, *Forosoco*, set out their stall, coined from the first two letters of the genres they combine: folk, rock, soul and country. All four are duly present here again, from rock opener Take Off This Tattoo and a cover of Pat Benatar's We Belong, the Motown beat of Put Your Hand Up, folksome shaggy dog tale Ballad Of The Brothers and big hat country of Losing The Night. Buried at the back of the album is Live With The Lie, by far the best of the lot, a smouldering song of betrayal and loss, sung with genuine emotion and resonance. Solid middle-America rockin' fun.

Andy Fyfe

Ed Harcourt

★★★

El Magnifico

DEATHLESS RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Guests include The Afghan Whigs' Greg Dulli and folk singer Kathryn Williams.

Partly a dense, piano-based production not dissimilar in vision to BC Camplight's *The Last Rotation Of Earth*, *El Magnifico* sees Harcourt return to song after a brace of instrumental LPs. Insights gleaned via collaborations with everyone from Paloma Faith to Nick Cave feed into thoughtfully sculpted songs exploring near-death experiences, escapist daydreams and self-sabotage. "I ain't Galahad/Guess that's too bad", reflects Harcourt at one point, but for all the studied self-analysis, it's the LP's sparer, outward-looking, more spontaneous-sounding songs which house the best melodies: Ghost Ship a suitably spectral thing with a hint of Don Henley's huskiness, and Anvils & Hammers packing something of Tom Waits' early piano-man classicism. The record's title, meanwhile, is no cocksure boast; rather it nods at the omnipotence with which young children sometimes credit their parents.

James McNair

Glen Campbell

★★★

Duets: Ghost On The Canvas Sessions

BIG MACHINE/SURFDOG. CD/DL/LP

His final album re-imagined as duets. It's what he would have wanted. Possibly.

He would (mostly) re-visit old material on the subsequent *See You There* and *Adiós*, but 2011's *Ghost On The Canvas*, Glen Campbell's last album of new songs, was his elegiac farewell, although since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's during the sessions, it wasn't intended as such. Seven years after Campbell's death, some of the tracks (plus The Long Walk Home and I'm Not Gonna Miss You from the I'll Be Me documentary) have been resurrected with the usual suspects (Sting, Dave Stewart, Dolly Parton) and more unlikely collaborators such as X and Hope Sandoval. Carole King and Sting are subsumed beneath Campbell's remarkably rich vocals, but Brian Wilson adds a Surf's Up-tinged backwash to Strong and Parton is a firecracker on the brief A Better Place. It's an odd, slightly unsettling notion, but nobody's reputation is tarnished, least of all Campbell's.

John Aizlewood

Lucy Rose

★★★★

This Ain't The Way You Go Out

COMMUNION. CD/DL/LP

Fifth album from Surrey singer turns heavy emotions into soulful daydreaming.

Lucy Rose suffered a hellishly rough time before making this defiantly-titled record, having fractured eight vertebrae due to post-natal osteoporosis, gradually working her way back to fitness through hydrotherapy. In Dusty Frames, over opaque electric piano, she sings, "Life could be so simple, but it's full of pain" before resolving to "change it all". Much like the mental health difficulties she expressed on 2019's *No Words Left*, this doesn't make for bleak listening (see the dreamy arpeggios of floaty opener Light As Grass). Having moved fully away from her indie folk roots into piano-based soul, Rose here enlists Solange and Sampha collaborator Kwes to bring modern R&B soundscapes to a suite of songs that are more reflective than self-pitying, and unlike her last, beats-free album, often grounded by solid grooves that allow her bewitching melodies to soar.

Tom Doyle

Martin Simpson

★★★★

Skydancers

TOPIC. CD/DL/LP

Look who's hawking? Folk guitar mage reaches new heights.

One of the brightest stars of folk's '80s and '90s dark ages, Martin Simpson's ability to code-switch from trad arr to slide guitar and old timey Americana helped to sustain a vibrant, varied career. Last year, the 70-year-old showcased an array of younger singers on his Appalachian collection, *Nothing But Green Willow*, while revealing an unexpected sideline as a Angus Young-style metal guru in fantasy folk rock group, The Magpie Arc. *Skydancers* returns to more familiar terrain with fingerbusting panache. Sheffield neighbour Richard Hawley helped out with half a line on the soaring title track – a celebration of the endangered hen harrier, commissioned by naturalist Chris Packham – and Simpson's Fragile Water is splendid too. The traditional material, though, is revelatory, lyrical guitar work underpinning revisions of Cherry Tree Carol, Alan Tyne Of Harrow and the closing instrumental Donal Og. *Penguin Eggs*-good. Seriously.

Jim Wirth

Mark Knopfler

★★★★

One Deep River

BRITISH GROVE/EMI. CD/DL/LP

More vivid character sketches on solo LP number 10.

"Something creative always happens by not panicking", says Mark Knopfler, and *One Deep River* is the proof. Whether saying goodbye (Watch Me Gone; Before My Train Comes) or recalling his Tyneside upbringing (see title track), these effortless story songs derive potency from laid-back simplicity. Backed by such musical giants as Richard Bennett (guitar), Greg Leisz (pedal steel) and Jim Cox (piano), Knopfler portrays lives eclipsed and outmoded on Tex-Mex ballad Smart Money, sketches the 1923 Siskiyou train robbery on Tunnel 13, and furnishes Ahead Of The Game with a sublime guitar hook while pining for his days playing pubs. Timeless country song Janine also builds a world from precious little, its pining love story set in "a dusty little cowtown/Turned into a boomtown fast". A masterfully subtle follow-up to 2018's *Down The Road Wherever*.

James McNair

The Black Keys

★★★★

Ohio Players

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney back to peak performance, with a little help from their friends.

IF THE BLACK Keys sounded like a duo running on the fumes of inspiration on 2022's *Dropout Boogie*, with this follow-up, they've returned with a full tank. Tangentially named after the US funk band, *Ohio Players* sees the Keys relinquish complete control by throwing open the door to a parade of collaborators – Beck and Dan The Automator on the party-starting Beautiful People (Stay High); Greg Kurstin and Noel Gallagher elsewhere. The latter features on the characteristically big singalong ballad On The Game, cut live at Toe Rag Studios in London, while the stomping Don't Let Me Go sounds like a great lost FM hit, highlighting the fact that this is the most streamlined and tunes-packed Black Keys album since 2011's *El Camino*. Overall, it's the sound of a band rejuvenated.

Tom Doyle

Back in the game: The Black Keys play up.

Fang club: Vampire Weekend (from left) Chris Baio, Ezra Koenig and Chris Tomson return with cosmic new tricks.

Vampire Weekend

★★★★

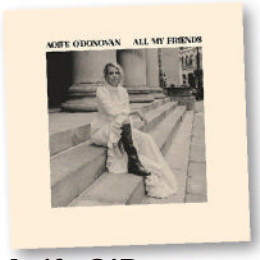
Only God Was Above Us

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP

High and mighty: eclectic New Yorkers let there be more light.

"FUCK THE WORLD," sings Ezra Koenig on Ice Cream Piano, setting an unusually harsh tone for Vampire Weekend's stylishly crumpled fifth LP. Some raging may have occurred in the five years since the release of *Father Of The Bride* – the band's first outing since the departure of in-house boffin Rostam Batmanglij – but *Only God Was Above Us* feels like a record made by a band once more comfortable in their skins. The Keith Haring melodies of Classical and unexpected choral stabs on Mary Boone hark back to earlier VW incarnations, but there are pleasingly cosmic new tricks here too; check out the Skip Spence rhythm section and art noise stabs on Capricorn. "The enemy's invincible," sings Koenig as he faces up to his fortieth birthday on closer Hope, but there's a quiet contentment in that. Time is always running out: double the reason to love the world while you can.

Jim Wirth



Aoife O'Donovan

★★★★

All My Friends

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

Landmark-celebrating fourth album from Boston powerhouse.

O'Donovan's haunting call rings out on the galvanic title track, gradually joined by lone trumpet, trombone, orchestra, then echoing girls' choir. In summer 1920, women gather to await a key government decision. "Marching on, a Tennessee dawn is lifting over fields." Electrically filmic; the hairs stand up on your neck. Marking the centenary of America's 19th amendment, which allowed women to vote, the album riffs on moving suffragist letters. War Measure, ecstatic country rock, follows Woodrow Wilson's note of support ("I got your missive and I'm with you girl"). Someone To Follow, for O'Donovan's young daughter, is chiming, pure folk beauty, sunny with banjo, while The Right Time might be laid-back Carole King, grooving on guitar and harmonica, voice a humorous growl – "I could move a mountain, baby…" O'Donovan ends with a plea to use that vote this election year. Women battled to earn it.

Glyn Brown

Michael Schmelling

Grace Cummings

★★★

Ramona

ATO/PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Australian singer-songwriter proves she's the real thing.

You don't need to know that Grace Cummings has acting experience to pick up the theatricality in her work – if her thunderously arranged third album started with a shout of "overture and beginners, please", it would not be entirely inappropriate. Despite being recorded in Topanga Canyon with Jonathan Wilson and musicians including harpist Mary Lattimore, *Ramona* has a very on-Broadway energy. There are occasional Blue Hotel lapses, but I'm Getting Married To The War or A Precious Thing come across like a rock opera Aldous Harding, while the title track – inspired by Bob Dylan's 1964 song To Ramona – is third curtain-call Patti Smith. The force of her voice alone earths these songs, though, the untethered growl over the ominous Red Riding Hood piano of Help Is On Its Way proof she knows that there's more to high drama than simply making it up.

Victoria Segal

James

★★★★

Yummy

VIRGIN. CD/DL/LP

Insects, conspiracy theories and sex. Business as usual for shamanic Mancs.

After 18 LPs and over four interrupted decades at the coalface, James are still re-inventing themselves. With its cheery title, its atypically spartan production and its tendency to clatter into a walloping chorus, *Yummy* is a different kind of James LP. They're more straightforward than they've ever been, despite the *Wah Wah*-style loops that underpin the death ballad Folks. Lyrically, Tim Booth is multi-tasking *in excelsis*, whether admitting "I'm still mesmerised by cleavage" on Rogue, bewailing the slaughter of insects on Stay, and airing crackpot conspiracy theories on the stentorian Hey ("UFOs are on our radar… don't wave your facts in my face"). The obvious standout, Shadow Of A Giant, may muse upon the rock star's life for six minutes – apparently James fly EasyJet – but it's so uplifting, it transcends its subject matter to become a great James moment. They're not slackening.

John Aizlewood

Six Organs Of Admittance

★★★

Time Is Glass

DRAG CITY. CD/LP

Veteran auteur rejuvenates his union of American folk and psychedelia.

Ben Chasny's close-to-three-decade venture as Six Organs Of Admittance has yielded around 27 LPs – there are also parallel activities with psych-rockers Comets On Fire, myriad collaborations and side-projects. *Time Is Glass* underscores the musical vision of this aspect of his journey. Folky in a John Fahey, Robbie Basho way, it is also woozily psychedelic in a kosmische-come-Pearls Before Swine way. The nine tracks taking-up these 38 minutes could represent the creative output of someone recording for the first time, someone privately honing their muse to get it as pin-sharp as possible for their debut. The crispness may be to do with Chasny resettling in California's Humboldt County, which he left 20 years ago. The passing of time has, indeed, brought a crystal-like clarity. With its meticulous ebb and flow, *Time Is Glass* is best approached in a single sitting.

Kieron Tyler

Justice

★★★

Hyperdrama

ED BANGER. CD/DL/LP

French house enfants terribles return, with guests.

If 2018's live document *Woman Worldwide* captured the rocked-out intensity of Justice's arena shows, *Hyperdrama* catches Xavier de Rosnay and Gaspard Augé hedging their bets between playing to old strengths or going for the pop jugular. On paper, two collaborations with Tame Impala (Neverender; One Night/All Night) sound nailed-on, but both are high gloss, low impact, veering towards anonymous MOR, while a stripped back hook-up with Miguel (Saturnine) and dramatic turn with Thundercat (The End) play better to their outlaw strengths. *Hyperdrama* excels when they try to out-Justice themselves, whether mainlining gabber on Generator, hardcore techno on the churchy Muscle Memory, or enlisting Connan Mockasin to do his best Vincent Price/Thriller impression on Explorer. Ultimately hit and miss, Justice's gift for arena-friendly hooks remains undimmed.

Andy Cowan

Paraorchestra, Brett Anderson & Charles Hazlewood

★★★

Death Songbook

BMG. DL/LP

Orchestral pop songs about the imponderable, featuring Nadine Shah and Gwenno.

With vocalists Brett Anderson, Gwenno and Nadine Shah on board, the project by Paraorchestra and conductor Charles Hazlewood examines songs "about death, the death of love, of loss, and ultimately of transcendence". While some compositions are more oblique (does Enjoy The Silence by Depeche Mode speak of any of the above?), a crepuscular coherence is achieved through the presence of Suede's frontman. Anderson's version of Echo & The Bunnymen's The Killing Moon brings new drama to the original. Other familiar songs (Black's Wonderful Life and Jacque Brel's My Death) sit alongside a few of Anderson's own. Although at times impressive (Nadine Shah's androgynous alto on Mercury Rev's Holes), the vocal performances connect less than the instrumentals: watercolour arrangements with the allure of John Barry's Goldfinger film score.

Irina Shtreis

Ray of light: Leyla McCalla crafts uplifting messages of faith.

Alternative energy

Haitian-American cellist/singer offers songs of hope and transformation. By **Stevie Chick.**

Leyla McCalla

★★★★

Sun Without The Heat

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

LEYLA McCALLA'S previous album, the Obama-approved *Breaking The Thermometer*, was a song cycle about Radio Haiti-Inter and how the station's journalists chronicled the suffering of the country's marginalised people in the face of political instability, corruption and bloodshed. It's testament to her inventiveness, her deftness, that such weighty material translated to so uplifting a listening experience.

The Haitian-American cellist/singer/songwriter pulls off a similarly impressive feat on this follow-up, inspired by Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons From Marine Mammals, a text by academic Alexis Pauline Gumbs that explores the historic mistreatment of sea life as a metaphor for society's abuse of oppressed people. Again, heavy stuff. But McCalla once more works her alchemical magic, her Caribbean-rooted folksong engaging with the overriding message of Gumbs' work: that change is always possible.

So there are songs here to soothe, to reassure. Her honeyed vocal is often in comfort mode, as on Give Yourself A Break, where she strings her words of compassion across simple ukulele strum and Pete Olynciw's contemplative bass. On the keening, closing track I Want To Believe, her tentative optimism is cushioned by reverb-heavy piano chords and a melody retracing Desperado's steps, the warmth of the familiar offering strength.

But these aren't simply lullabies to pacify. Scaled To Survive is a rumination on the bond between parent and child and the importance of joy, McCalla directly quoting Gumbs' text when she sings, "Thank you for laughing me into this portal", over upbeat guitar chimes, an undertow of cello and the chirping of birds. On lines like "What you learned drowning taught me how to breathe" and "How do you let yourself feel all the pain?", she's also keenly aware of her parents' sacrifices as first-generation immigrants, pushing the song into a darker space.

McCalla and her musicians pursue this tension throughout. On Tree, a woman metamorphoses into a sapling for want of love, while another throws herself into the ocean, searching for escape. As if to mirror these turbulent journeys, the song's shimmering acid-folk itself shifts into intense psychedelic freak-out, Nahum Zdybel's volcanic fuzz guitar and Shawn Myers' brittle snare as abrasive as some sublime Zamrock jam. Take Me Away's yearning for transfiguration – its earnest plea of "Make me unafraid, make me brave" – is soundtracked by guitars that sound like thumb pianos, set to charged, Fela-worthy Afrobeat shuffle.

These are songs of hope and transformation. But as on the title track, dedicated to former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, McCalla knows you can't have that hope without fear, and she never ignores that the act of transformation can itself be traumatic. This edge, this acknowledgment of the stakes at play behind her messages of faith, pushes these songs past any risk of empty sentimentalism, and makes *Sun Without The Heat* truly uplifting.

Chuck Strangers

★★★★

A Forsaken Lover's Plea

LEX. CD/DL/LP

Former Pro Era producer steps out from behind the desk to rap the older man's blues.

Though hip-hop's considered a young man's game, we're living through a golden age of Gloomy Middle-Aged Rap, from the inspired grumbling of DIY stalwart Billy Woods, to Danny Brown's post-sobriety confessional *Quaranta*, to this downbeat marvel from Brooklyn-born, LA-based MC/producer Strangers. Only in his thirties, Strangers has a voice beyond his years – the speed at which scrabbling for a living in the rap game will age you is one of the album's recurring themes. But the mood established on the brooding likes of Sunset Park – Strangers murmuring "Spliff after spliff/Keep the pain quelled/My fingers on a cliff" – is addictive, his smudgy productions cooking up a dreamlike funk. Having looted various quiet storm nuggets and Isaac Hayes soundtracks for strings, beats and vibes, Stranger's soliloquies on love, drugs and hip-hop deliver a most compelling, modernist strain of the blues.

Stevie Chick

Anoushka Shankar

★★★★

Chapter II: How Dark It Is Before Dawn

LEITER. DL/LP

Second in the sitar player's trilogy of mini-albums is a corker.

Featuring Nils Frahm, the opening salvo in Shankar's triptych of "more spontaneous" collaborations (see MOJO 360) was excellent, but this follow-up, recorded with the composer Peter Raeburn, is a significant foray into new territory. While its predecessor conjured up the ambience of a summer garden, *How Dark It Is Before Dawn* is a Philip Glass-inspired journey through a nocturnal world (viewed by Shankar as the healing process required before facing a new day, so perhaps useful to readers needing a school-night equivalent of *Screamadelica*). The opener, Pacifica, feels as much like lights going out as the second track Offering's drones give the impression of stars coming out, before the R.E.M. of What Dreams Are Made Of slides into your brain and the salving begins. It may only be 24-minutes long, but *Chapter II* feels as rejuvenating as eight hours' sleep.

David Hutcheon

Rosali

★★★★

Bite Down

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

Americana-meets-classic rocker on Rosali Middleman's fourth album.

Following *Variable Happiness*, an album of ruminative guitar improvisations (under the name Edsel Axle), Rosali Middleman returns to the nitty-gritty, curating her invariably crunchy, bittersweet band sound. *Bite Down* captures her move from longtime home Philadelphia to North Carolina, but the back-up crew from 2021 album *No Medium* remains: bassist David Nance, co-guitarist James Schroeder and drummer Kevin Donahue. Add Rosali's guitar and they're an expertly malleable quartet; one minute Sandy Denny-era Fairport (Change Is In The Form), then cantering Fleetwood Mac (On Tonight) or a dusty Crazy Horse (My Kind). The centrifugal force is Rosali's calm, deep voice, belying her lyrics' nervous energy and drama, balancing vulnerability ("Hold my tears and I balloon/I sat alone, I was invisible" from Hills On Fire) with resilience. "You freak me out/And that's what I came for," On Tonight affirms. "I'm no drifting fool/All alone and it's all right."

Martin Aston

Pernice Brothers

★★★★

Who Will You Believe

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Self-produced follow-up to 2019's *Spread The Feeling*.

Joe Pernice knows how to write great songs. Always did, as New West's supersized 25th anniversary reissue of Pernice Brothers' debut *Overcome By Happiness* last year can attest. After a long run of own-label releases, the band stayed with New West for what might be their best yet. All the various elements in Joe's songs are here, from the country-folk that tagged them Americana (lovely Ordinary Goldmine; I Don't Need That Anymore, Joe's duet with Neko Case) to the string arrangements that saw them labelled chamber pop (including a waltz-time orchestral instrumental, A Song For Sir Robert Helpmann). Among other highlights are sway-along December In Her Eyes – one of several songs whose melodies are rooted in classic '60s pop and rock – and The Purple Rain, whose genesis was the death of two close friends and a family member and which closes the album with a choir.

Sylvie Simmons

John Lurie

★★★★

Painting With John

STRANGE & BEAUTIFUL. DL/LP

Music from the TV series that is still to air in the UK.

John Lurie has been making music since the late '70s, first as part of New York art jazz outfit The Lounge Lizards and later as outsider blues crackpot Marvin Pontiac. However, after contracting Lyme disease in 2000 Lurie developed a second career as a painter of surreal, pointillist watercolour landscapes. Incorporating music from his entire career, but centred around works composed specifically for his quietly hypnotic recent series on painting and the art of living, the 56 tracks assembled here are a joy and delight. They range from the 18-minute sax-and-drums Art Ensemble jazz minimalism of The Invention Of Animals to a handful of guitar and horn miniatures that vibrate with eerie, lucid beauty. What's most surprising is how well the collection works as a whole, marking Lurie out as a latter-day, stay-at-home Moondog, composing jazz symphonies for the lonely, downhearted and tired.

Andrew Male

Dee C Lee

★★★★

Just Something

ACID JAZZ. DL/LP

Fourth solo album from former Wham! and Style Council singer.

Recorded with members of the James Taylor Quartet and Brand New Heavies, Dee C Lee's first LP since 1998's Japan-only *Smiles* has a Saturday night feel-good vibe; its invigorating mix of '70s rare groove, '80s soul pop and '90s acid jazz tipping the hat to her previous career – as backing singer with Wham!, vocal co-helm with The Style Council and solo singer with Top 5 hit See The Day. Songs bounce along: the best are Don't Forget About Love which channels the aforesaid Council with its quivery flute intro and jazzy horns, Everyday Summer, an uplifting ballad written by daughter Leah Weller, and For Once In My Life, not a cover of Stevie Wonder but a self-reliance anthem written back in 1998 after her marriage break-up.

Lois Wilson

Cedric Burnside

★★★★

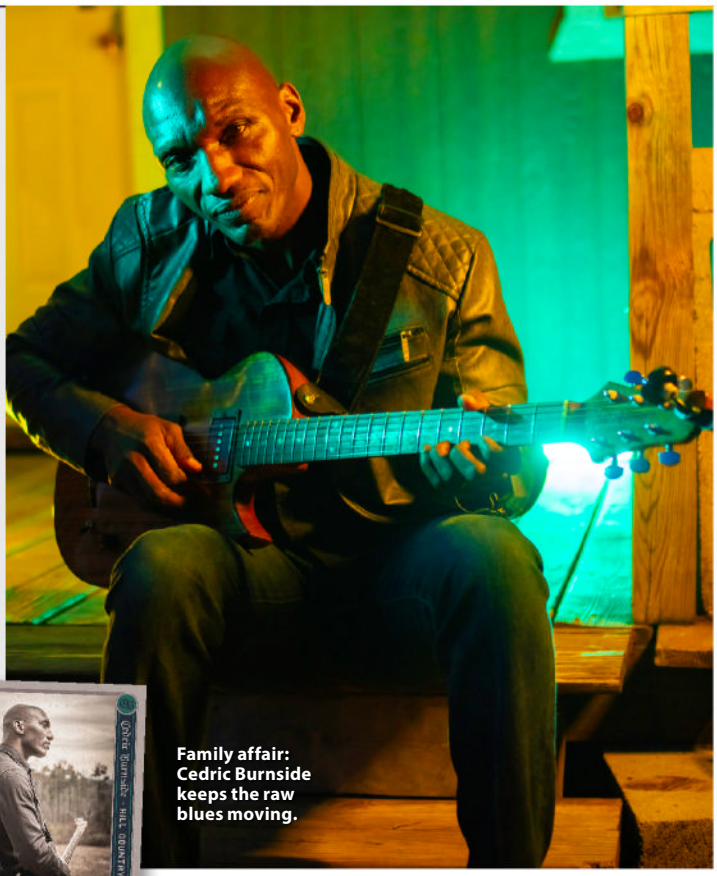
Hill Country Love

PROVOGUE/MASCOT. CD/DL/LP

Eleventh LP from Grammy-winning, 45-year-old "inheritor" of hill country blues.

OVER TWO DAYS in an abandoned legal office filled with trash cans, Cedric Burnside and his three-piece band including producer Luther Dickinson moved in their equipment and recorded *Hill Country Love* live with no overdubs. His tenth album since 2001 is full of raw blues – he dubs it 'feel music; you just do what you feel,' he told MOJO – and while his mentor and grandfather RL's original form was violent and nihilist, Burnside's is just as fierce; sometimes wandering, sometimes stomping rhythms are buoyed by positivity energy and hope for change. Covers of Mississippi Fred McDowell's You Got To Move and RL's own Po Black Mattie honour his roots; the first sinewy and sparse with baying harmonica; the second thumping and hypnotic. Originals such as Love You Music, meanwhile, open a dialogue with African desert blues.

Lois Wilson



Family affair: Cedric Burnside keeps the raw blues moving.

Jim Arbogast

Arushi Jain

★★★★

Delight

LEAVING. CD/DL/LP

New wave of rainbow dome musick from self-declared "modular princess".

"I feel irresistibly drawn to your beauty," sings Arushi Jain on the closing track of *Delight*, a sentiment that generates much of the tension driving her second album. Trained in both Indian classical music and computer engineering, the New York-based composer's multi-layered tracks constantly slide and shift into new spaces, suggesting the elegant precision of a rotating stage set. While her 2021 album *Under A Lilac Sky* developed around Indian raags (or ragas) associated with the night-time, here she's grown these tracks from the Bageshri raag, associated with longing for a lover. That's apparent in the steamed-up, hothouse sensuality of Our Touching Tongues, while throughout *Delight*, sampled acoustic instruments – flute, marimba, cello, guitar – add new flesh to her music's bones. Yet for all the luxuriant, Gong-like dreaminess of I Surrender or Imagine An Orchestra, sudden beats and vocal hooks make *Delight* more unpredictable odyssey than easy float downstream.

Victoria Segal

Charles Lloyd

★★★★

The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow

BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP

With Wayne Shorter gone and Sonny Rollins retired, he's the last saxophone elder statesman.

Charles Lloyd has lived many lives: teenage R&B honker; million-selling 1960s pioneer of 'psychedelic jazz'; Big Sur dropout; sideman to The Beach Boys and friend of Hendrix; and now, deep into his eighties, the saxophonist is making some of the most potent music of his life. This double album features a new quartet with drummer Brian Blade, bassist Larry Grenadier and old collaborator Jason Moran on piano. Six of the 15 tunes are new, others are imaginative reworkings of material from earlier line-ups. While Lloyd's playing is rooted in Coltrane-ish improvisation, the spirit is meditative, lines curling away like wisps of smoke. Moran is a superb foil – funky, freeform or formal. Defiant, Tender Warrior, with its prayer-like grace is a gorgeous opener, but the seven-minute title track best reflects the fluid magic of the quartet as they travel from deep soul to deep space.

John Bungey

Amanda Whiting

★★★★

The Liminality Of Her

FIRST WORLD. DL/LP

British jazz harpist reaches through a musical membrane.

Considering how essential pianos and vibraphones are in jazz, it's surprising the harp has historically been considered a whimsical curiosity. That perception has altered recently, with Alice Coltrane and Dorothy Ashby being widely reassessed and admired, and a – what do we call it? – glissando of new practitioners appearing, exploring the unique space the instrument occupies between its folky tone, its classical grandeur, its frequent use to initiate a dream sequence – we are programmed to be lulled when we hear one – and the more propulsive requirements of jazz. Whiting is a superb homegrown example. Four albums in, she's located a particularly sweet place here, her playing cinematic, lyrical and lissom by turns, her band skilfully anchoring the moods. UK flute hero Chip Wickham is a welcome guest, as is gifted young singer Peach. Chris Cracknell's warm, inviting production puts you right in the room with them all.

Jim Irvin

Shervin Lainez

Lizz Wright: between sensual and sanctified.

Church Chords

★★★★

Elvis, He Was Schlager

OTHERLY LOVE. DL/LP

Nels Cline, John Herndon and Jeff Parker guest on producer Stephen Buono's genre-averse debut.

Built upon a bedrock of sessions recorded at Steve Albini's Chicago studio in 2016, Church Chords' debut had a winding, sometimes difficult genesis. Not that you can hear it. Ex-guitarist in Split Red, Stephen Buono revels in a directorial role, intertwining hip-hop, darkwave, jazz and experimental rock amid the Tricky-ish abstractions of Sweet Magnet and punky propulsion of Recent Mineral. Standout Warriors Of Playtime stretches the anything-goes formula farther out on a jazzy improv fest with great back-and-forth between saxophonist Nate Walcott and guitarist Jeff Parker, while Nels Cline's fretwork lights up Krautrock reinvention She Lays On A Leaf. A bracing mash-up of the Ronettes, Bauhaus, Miles Davis and Faust, *Elvis*… refuses to hold its pretensions in check and is all the better for it.

Andy Cowan

Lizz Wright

★★★★

Shadow

BLUES & GREENS. CD/DL/LP

New recording marks 20th anniversary of solo debut.

While other jazz and bluesily inclined singers of her generation have had their moments in the spotlight – Norah Jones, Madeleine Peyroux, Melody Gardot – Lizz Wright's career is more of a slow burn. The Georgia-born singer has, though, won a loyal following for her pure, velvety alto deployed on gospel, jazz and R&B. As Wright travels between the sensual and the sanctified here, there are plenty of lovely moments: Angélique Kidjo's guest vocal on Sparrow, the lonesome fiddle on Lost In The Valley; the strings cushioning I Concentrate On You; and the swirl of righteous organ that lifts I Made A Lover's Prayer. Amid 11 covers and originals, what you don't get is surprises: this is Wright deep in her gently paced comfort zone. For fans, though, that's still a fine place to join her.

John Bungey

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN

The Messthetics And James Brandon Lewis

★★★★

The Messthetics And James Brandon Lewis

IMPULSE! CD/DL/LP

Exuberant collaboration between seasoned instrumental adventurists and rising tenor sax star.

James Brandon Lewis first joined The Messthetics on-stage at New York's 2019 Winter Jazzfest, his chemistry with guitarist Anthony Pirog (established via sessions with free jazz drummer William Hooker) augmented by Joe Lally and Brendan Canty (rhythm section of Washington DC legends Fugazi). Picking up where Fear Not, the anthemic closer to Lewis's 2023 LP *Eye Of I*, left off, opening salvos L'Orso and Emergence are short but toothsome affairs with a vivid punk frisson as Pirog and Lewis diverge, double-up and undercut each other, sometimes indiscernibly, rather than idly shred and shronk. Elsewhere, inward-looking ballads Boatly and Railroad Tracks Home allow for more pensive, reflective solos with clear-sighted melodies. Whether prayerful or at full pelt, the leanness works handsomely.

ALSO RELEASED

Jonah Parzen-Johnson

★★★★

You're Never Really Alone

WE JAZZ. DL/LP

There's stripped back and there's Jonah Parzen-Johnson's latest. While previous efforts experimented with drones and electronics, here the Chicago baritone saxophonist explores the technical limits of his instrument via circular breathing, multi-phonics and sustained dissonance. Inward-looking highlights When I Feel Like Myself and Everyone Is Somewhere major not just on long-held notes but the spaces in-between, his tone as intimate as a whispered confession.

Maridalen

★★★★

Gressholmen

JAZZLAND RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Named after the small Norwegian island where it was recorded, Maridalen's third doesn't divert from their affectless sound. While breathy burrs of sax and trumpet interweave with pulsing bass on Innrønt and Landkjenning, the shadowy enraptures of Mysig traces a more achingly romantic arc. The additions of saw, dulcimer and pedal steel enhance rather than overwhelm, as Maridalen barely change the formula yet move it forward.

Lucien Johnson

★★★★

Ancient Relics

DELUGE. DL/LP

The cascading raptures of harpist Natalia Lagi'itaua Mann allow New Zealand saxophonist Johnson to butterfly in on his smouldering second outing. Be it Space Junk's pulsing improvisations, Ada's impeccable cocktail jazz or the title track's languid longing, he navigates bruised melodies with a pleasingly raspy tone. Set to a low simmer, *Ancient Relics* evokes Pharoah Sanders and Alice Coltrane without sounding nostalgic, its undeniable beauty elusively wrought.

Ivo Perelman

★★★★

Embracing The Unknown

MAHAKALA MUSIC. CD/DL

Recorded on the fly alongside Reggie Workman (bass) and Andrew Cyrille (percussion), prolific Brazilian tenor saxophonist Perelman's latest hinges on his repartee with Chad Fowler (stritch, saxello). Their dramatic dialogue unfolds in waves, Perelman's high register staccato honks and wide vibrato matched by Fowler's fervent wails and unexpected note clusters, pensive passages seamlessly folding into more riotous exchanges. Invigorating free jazz at its most impactful. *AC*

divr

★★★★

Is This Water

WE JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Freeing and hypnotic debut from Swiss avant-garde jazz improv trio.

Boldly claiming to "play in multi-directional time", the Basel-based trio of Philipp Eden (keys), Raphael Walser (bass) and Jonas Ruther (drums) specialise in making tiny melodic changes amid a fog of repetitions. Tea High's brittle melody and Upeksha's echoing piano motifs are vivid abstractions underpinned by subtle bass explorations as fractured polyrhythms lurch into the light. For all their compositional gifts, their interpretative skills are sharper still, whether tapping into the emotional undertow of Radiohead's All I Need or twisting Gus Arnheim's 1930s 78 Sweet And Lovely into something more sinister on Supreme Sweetness, full of boom-bap low-end and internal tension. Add in Dan Nicholls' morphing post-production edits alongside atmospheric use of extended technique, and *Is This Water* conclusively proves the piano trio format is far from wrung dry.

Andy Cowan

Halo Maud

★★★★

Celebrate

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

French psych-pop voyager Maud Nadal's dazzling second album.

The Chemical Brothers were first to widely publicise Parisian underground star Halo Maud, featuring her vocals on their 2023 album *For That Beautiful Feeling*. She's a total package, writing, playing and producing everything on her 2018 debut *Je Suis Une Île* (I Am An Island). With her skill set and penchant for Technicolor pop – she describes it as a fusion of dream-pop and *chansons Françaises* – Maud has something of Tame Impala's Kevin Parker about her, but *Celebrate* transports us to other realms besides. My Desire Is Pure has elements of Björk's mid-'90s bedazzle, the airy swing of chanson elevates a cover of Fred Frith's Iceberg, and Last Day Song has Chemical Brothers chemistry.

On the ecstatic, explosive Terres Infinies, she sings, "Je suis en plein voyage", meaning she's on a journey – and what a dazzling trip it's turned out to be.

Martin Aston

The Taj Mahal Sextet

★★★

Swingin' Live At The Church In Tulsa

LIGHTNING ROD. CD/DL/LP

Veteran 'world blues' troubadour can still swing.

Judging from this electrifying performance in front of a rapt studio audience in the late Leon Russell's The Church studio in Oklahoma, 81-year-old Mahal, a 2023 Grammy winner for his Ry Cooder collaboration *Get On Board*, has lost none of his fire and enthusiasm. With age, his voice has grown more gravelly, but what it's lost in smoothness and tonal clarity, it has gained in emotional heft and gravitas. Backed by a well-honed band, including Hawaiian lap steel specialist Bobby Ingano, who excels on the achingly atmospheric Twilight In Hawaii, Mahal regales his fans with a typically eclectic melange of what he dubs world blues – a seamless blend of flavours that veer from blues and folk to Cajun and calypso. The performance's high points include the Mahal classics, Queen Bee and Corrina, both delivered with gusto, proving that age is just a number.

Charles Waring

Kahil El' Zabar's Ethnic Heritage Ensemble

★★★★

Open Me, A Higher Consciousness Of Sound And Spirit

SPIRITMUSE. CD/DL/LP

Spiritual jazz act revisit old favourites to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

Acclaimed Chicago-based percussionist Kahil El' Zabar formed the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble in 1974 to fuse the musical traditions of ancestral Africa with the contemporary milieu of spiritual jazz. These new recordings offer a double-album helping of musical gems that seethe with smouldering intensity, simultaneously troubling the mind and massaging the heart. Including a charged take on civil rights anthem Compared To What, the group also revisit choice moments of their back catalogue for new interpretations, including the percussion-heavy post-bop blast of Hang Tuff, and the sax-and-clarinet duel that is Barundi, as well as their oblique salute to Ornette Coleman. A fine rendition of Miles's All Blues is another hight point, here given extra dimensions through the interplay of cello, viola and kalimba. An excellent endeavour, executed by masters of their craft.

David Katz

Chastity Belt

★★★★

Live Laugh Love

SUICIDE SQUEEZE. CD/DL/LP

A new direction for Seattle's finest feminist noise pop.

The title for Chastity Belt's fifth LP is an ironic take on those cringey cursive wall quotes and the platitudes of influencer 'wellness' culture. With laconic lyrics and piledriving guitar, the band offer their own form of life-coaching, one shaped by a self-deprecating feminism. It's no longer songs like Pussy Weed Beer, but there is the same wry observation of love, life and friendship. Musically they have become more ambitious – the track Chemtrails, for instance, is a mood piece that combines sparse guitar and intricate drumming with lush chorus lines, and I-90 Bridge is a freewheeling, atmospheric tribute to their home town. Just one thing – all four take it in turns to sing so it's not just Julia Shapiro on lead, and in places the vocals could be stronger. But overall this record is a heady, expansive treat.

Lucy O'Brien

Alex Harris

★★★★

Back To Us

SHANACHIE. CD/DL

Arresting debut from the missing link between Al and Cee-Lo Green.

A pastor's son from Manchester, GA, Harris was steeped in gospel music from early childhood, fronting his family's singing group by the time he was seven. Although his résumé reveals he has performed in front of two US presidents (Obama and Biden) and shared the stage with Aretha Franklin, surprisingly *Back To Us* is his first LP. An impressive showcase for Harris's richly melismatic vocals, it opens with a potent cover of country singer Kevin Welch's Millionaire, reformatted into an uplifting gospel number. In the main, though, Harris writes most of the material, with highlights ranging from the uplifting hymnal Something Gotta Change to Lose My Religion, a ballad about romantic love's transfiguring power. He also offers inspired twists on Otis Redding's I've Got Dreams To Remember and Solomon Burke's Cry To Me, both rendered with a passionate intensity.

Charles Waring

Diane Birch

★★★★

Flying On Abraham

LEGERE. CD/DL/LP

***Tendaberry*, *Tapestry* and *Pirates* revisited.**

BIG THINGS have been prophesied for daughter-of-a-preacherman Diane Birch since 2006 when Prince spotted her playing piano at Beverly Hills' Polo Lounge. Yet four excellent albums (one of goth covers) have left the earth strangely unmoved by this heiress to the sanctified tradition of Carole King and Laura Nyro. Undaunted, her new collection of beautifully wrought originals broadens her palette to echo Rickie Lee as well as Carly, Nicks, Joni (Moto Moon fades away in a *Hissing* reverie), and, in Russian Doll, The Who's Getting In Tune. Otherwise, UK relocation has barely Anglicised her vibe; despite production by Paul Stacey of Noel Gallagher renown in London and Wales, Monmouth could easily be Santa Monica. Fluid, funky and replete with cool licks and key changes, *Flying On Abraham* yields its meanings slowly but seductively, a warm bath for the soul.

Mat Snow

Keys to success: Diane Birch is fluid and funky on her latest.

Margo Ducharme

Kathryn Williams & Withered Hand

★★★★

Willson Williams

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. CD/DL/LP

Wise but not weary collaboration hits home.

Anyone who has had a DIY-related argument might find it hard to believe that putting up shelves is good material for a song. Dan Willson (who operates as Withered Hand) and Kathryn Williams are all about life's nuts-and-bolts, however. "The tower of self-help books by the bed/Might crush me in my sleep," sings Williams on Shelf, sweetly walking the line between order and chaos. Burnished with cello, mellotron and – courtesy of King Creosote – accordion, their warmly conversational collaboration nails down explorations of grief and alienation to vivid specifics. There are Elvis Costello gigs and paperbacks dropped in baths; R U 4 Real takes a surprisingly explicit turn, while Our Best subverts stiff-upper-lip stoicism with a heartbreaking wobble. Unlike that shelf, it's sometimes a little too straight, but together Williams and Willson have built something quietly lovely, something that carries weight.

Victoria Segal

Texas & Spooner Oldham

★★★

The Muscle Shoals Sessions

PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Sharleen Spiteri teamed with the legendary session keyboardist.

After 2023's *The Very Best Of…* this is Texas's second back catalogue retread in a year, albeit a radically reworked one. Recorded within the hallowed halls of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, it strips a dozen Texas hits to piano and/or electric piano and vocals, but for all its gospel/soul intimacy and adept delivery, it never quite soars. A cover of Charles & Eddie's unassailable smash Would I Lie To You certainly helps, but there as elsewhere you find yourself pining for the rhythm section which only shows for a closing take on the old Drifters hit, Save The Last Dance For Me. Texas's own Say What You Want and The Conversation benefit from bare-bones exposure and Oldham's obvious know-how, but giving the unplugged treatment to Mr Haze and Keep On Talking only exposes their somewhat humdrum core.

James McNair

The Staves

★★★★

All Now

COMMUNION. CD/DL/LP

The Staveley-Taylor sisters return as a two-piece.

It's now well over a decade since Emily, Camilla and Jessica Staveley-Taylor emerged from the nicer parts of Watford. Since 2021's *Good Woman*, Emily – the oldest – has stepped back from frontline duties to concentrate on motherhood and Camilla has been waylaid by endometriosis, but *All Now* is their brightest, most bushy-tailed outing yet. As with other sisterhoods such as the Roches, McGarrigles and Pierces, they're steeped in the vocal tradition of country and folk, but The Staves add a sprinkling of English Americana. For all the consistency of their lambent harmonies and the stripped-down loveliness of I'll Never Leave You Alone, they navigate near-electro backdrops on So Gracefully and the title track. Lyrically reflective, You Held It All thunders along, and on Recognise they report from a Counting Crows concert ("All the songs you would recognise"). They're still sparkling.

John Aizlewood

Post rock: The Staves are at their most bushy-tailed.

Ellius Grace, Harvey Pearson

Charlie Parr

★★★★

Little Sun

SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS. CD/DL/LP

After 18 albums, country-bluesman finally pulls together a band.

Anyone who follows Charlie Parr's rambling social media posts about his often solitary life in Minnesota knows that he doesn't always play well with others. Dedicated to recording his previous albums more or less in the time it took him to play them alone, Parr has finally formed a one-off band for *Little Sun*. These are songs that he's had around for years which never fitted his recording MO, but which come alive with the added input of others. Which fits neatly with the album's themes of community and neighbourliness, whether with far-flung Facebook 'friends' or fellow loners, oddballs and the just plain unlucky in life. Parr's front porch vocals and mesmerising guitar pickings mingle with mouth harp, backing vocals, piano, electric guitar and fiddle on an album full of wonder and love for the unloved. He really should invite friends round more often.

Andy Fyfe

Dana Gavanski

★★★★

Late Slap

FULL TIME HOBBY. CD/DL/LP

Serbian-Canadian's third album, but the first made in Margate.

Based in London since 2020, Dana Gavanski remains immersed in the rootsy music of the Serbian kafana scene, the contemporary electro-folk of Tunng (whose Mike Lindsay produces here), the mannered quirkiness of Regina Spektor and Lael Neale's indie throb. As a result, *Late Slap* is initially tricky to unpick, but Gavanski is focused and, better still, adept at a the tight chorus, not least on the wonderful Singular Coincidence, where she glides over some multi-tracked male vocals which further evoke eastern Europe. Elsewhere the pretty, hypnotic Song For Rachel is as gentle as Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark's electro-pastoral phase, and the brass-tinged How To Feel Uncomfortable is as enticing as its title. There's an awful lot going on here, but as each layer unpeels there's another one to savour.

John Aizlewood

FOLK

BY JIM WIRTH

Niamh Bury

★★★★

Yellow Roses

CLADDAGH. CD/DL/LP

Petal power: wistful twistful debut from Ye Vagabonds-approved auteur.

Claddagh Records focused on traditional Irish music for much of its existence, but the revived label has taken a rather broader outlook; first the glowering debut from Lankum-related ØXN, and now this pastel-shaded pastoral from Niamh Bury, produced by Ye Vagabonds' Brían Mac Gloinn. Another session regular at Dublin's Cobblestone, Bury sings straight folk beautifully on Lovely Adam – a gender-switched Lovely Hannah – but tacks toward more hazy, surrealist Narnia on her own material; as she sings on the title track: "A pride of lions underwater, all is not as it seems." Gatefold sleeve enthusiasts will spot shades of COB's *Moyshe McStiff* on the banjo-decked Bite The Bridle, and traces of Jackson C Frank on Pianos In The Snow, but the oddball chord changes, cryptic lyrics and East-West melodies of the magnificent Budapest are all Bury's own. Think folky Cat Power or sun-drunk Weyes Blood and prepare to be transported.

ALSO RELEASED

Hevelwood

★★★★

Of Greatness Receding

BANDCAMP. CD/DL

Frankie Archer's first EP has raised the flag for laptop folk again, and Tim Woodson's pitch-shifting debut as Hevelwood covers similarly tech-savvy ground. He whips out the vocoder for The Banks Of The Dee, shines Ibiza sunshine on Willie O'Winsbury, and scores high with his own songs, not least To Be Taller and Eno-flavoured Pastorale Spectre. Morris men with glowsticks: it's the future.

Johnny Campbell

★★★★

True North

SUBVERSIVE FOLK. CD/DL/LP

Huddersfield's hard-rambling Johnny Campbell recorded local songs at the highest points of England's northernmost counties for his new LP. *True North* is a psychogeography field trip, blustery wind and the occasional wobbly vocal adding extra defiant charm to The Derby Ram, Homeward Bound, Here's The Tender Coming and Cumberland sauce-pot Lish Young Buy-A-Broom. A rucksack full of wonders.

Alison Cotton

★★★★

Engelchen

ROCKET RECORDINGS. DL/LP

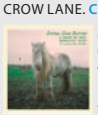
As they travelled Europe in the 1930s to watch opera, Sunderland-born sisters Ida and Louise Cook conspired to save scores of jews from Nazi persecution. A fellow Mackem, 13th Day Of May/Left Outsides goth folkie Cotton transforms their heroic story into a haunted, rueful song cycle. The pitch: apocalyptic June Tabor ups the doom ante on Les Misérables. Fabulously serious work.

Serious Sam Barrett

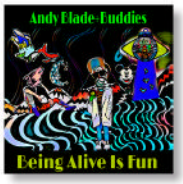
★★★★

A Drop Of The Morning Dew

CROW LANE. CD/DL/LP



A grizzly, Michael Chapman-style folk-bluesman, Sam Barrett typically went to Keighley's Bacca Pipes club to record this, his own *Frampton Comes Alive*. A skater boy, slide guitar whizz and fine solo singer, Barrett leads the chorus on Holmfirth Anthem and Was On An April Morning, and does the flat-cap road warrior bit on the title track and Drive Your Way Home. No pop, no style: strictly roots. *JW*



Andy Blade +Buddies

★★★

Being Alive Is Fun

DOTAGE. CD/DL/LP

A punk-schooled teen in Eater, Blade's 'buddies' include Gen X guitarist Derwood Andrews and The Damned's Rat Scabies. But younger voices (Kat Sharkova, Myura Amara) add post-punk drama to This Is Real's motorik, or the Cure-dark Your Strange. *JB*

Dan Boeckner

★★★★

Boeckner!

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

With Sunn O))) producer Randall Dunn and Matt Chamberlain (drums, Arp synth), Wolf Parade's Boeckner plays with immaculate restraint on opener Lose. While the psych rockin' Don't Worry Baby is a third-eye-for-the-straight-guy highlight ("It's Easter everywhere"). *JB*

Claire Dickson

★★★★

The Beholder

NEW AMSTERDAM. DL/LP

The Brooklyn composer's second LP is a study in contrasts. Be it Your House's twisted radio transmissions and sombre strings or the title track's tactile use of samples, Dickson's voice pierces the sensorial aura, creating an idiosyncratic brand of ambient art pop. *AC*

J. Doursou

★★★

The Deafening Veil

FIRST LIGHT. DL/MC

Mining a similar cinematic bleakness to Tim Hecker, the French composer's reaction to the war in Ukraine brims with overdriven electronics, relentless sirens, weeping synth motifs and ghostly hints of voices buried in the mix. Dense and unsettling. *AC*

FYEAR

★★★★

FYEAR

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

A lament to a burning planet, this restless debut from Montréal avant-garde jazz ensemble has an end-of-times feel *à la* Matana Roberts. Setting poet Kaie Kellough's performative politics to an innovative meld of pedal steel, strings, sax and drums, it bypasses all the obvious tropes. *AC*

Odetta Hartman

★★★

Swansongs

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

New Yorker Hartman's lucid electro-pop filters idiosyncratic self-production via affinity with folk-blues tradition. Circus-field larks like Wacky or Good Socks are edged by darker dancefloor shapes (Winter Constellations) and Mother/Child, reworking her famous namesake. *JB*

Janek van Laak

★★★

Circle Of Madness

SONAR KOLLEKTIV. DL/LP

One half of Tutu Amuse, this Berlin-based drummer's solo debut shows a kaleidoscopic range. Sometimes playing within the groove, eclectic highlights include spiritual horn-fest Saints Blow, dub throwdown Here To Slay and simmering proggy fusion epic Octapussy. *AC*

Luce Mawdsley

★★★★

Northwest & Nebulous

PURE O. DL/LP

Liverpool composer Mawdsley plays guitar, organ and percussion as part of a chamber trio with clarinet and viola, recorded in the city's Nordic Church. Eight fluid, folk-tinged instrumentals sound quietly lovely while still shaking the emotional foundations. *JB*

Anaïs Mitchell

★★★★

Hadestown

SING IT AGAIN. CD/DL/LP

The full cast recording of Anais Mitchell's award-winning musical adaptation of Orpheus and Eurydice's ill-fated love. The stage version is 'bigger' than Mitchell's own Grammy-winner; New Orleans jazz supersedes the original's atmospheric folk while preserving its depth and soul. *JB*

Jess Ribeiro

★★★★

Summer Of Love

LABELMAN. CD/DL/LP

Ribeiro dials back from the sleek pop of 2019's *Love Hate* for something more organic. Slow-rollers Everything Is Now and Jump The Gun are dusted with sax, keys and strings, their implacable hooks expressed in a voice evoking Joanna Newsom, Nico and Kristin Hersh. *AC*

EXTENDED PLAY

Cosmic Analogue Ensemble

Les Grandes Vacances

Lebanese music producer Charif Megarbane is an ultra-prolific shapeshifter who, over the last decade, has released 100 albums on his own independent label and digital platform Hisstology, recorded in various locations – Beirut, Nairobi, Paris, Lisbon – and appearing under various names, but mostly all his own work. In 2020 alone he uploaded 10 albums using this particular banner, each featuring a discrete instrumental style. "It's a very spontaneous, playful, diary-like approach," he says. "I trust my instinct because instinct is based on experience." On *Les Grandes Vacances* (also available in physical formats through Jakarta Records) he offers up a neat distillation of the Ensemble's aesthetic across 18 tracks beamed in from Paris in the '60s, so we get John Barry-like melodies, ba-ba-da vocals, squidgy Moogs, melodicas, fuzzy guitar, haunted strings, rusty dulcimers and tiny mono drums, geared to appeal to fans of obscure library albums and classic French movies that exist only in the mind.

Jim Irvin

Making movies: Charif Megarbane, the one-man Cosmic Analogue Ensemble.

Ian Skelly

★★★

Lotus And The Butterfly

AV8. CD/LP

Solo LP from the Coral linchpin accompanied by a short story by bandmate Nick Power telling of a mythic mermaid song, bubbling lava and fugitive Galician ballads. You long for a little of that madness in the low-key Mersey psych-folk; sane and assured. *AM*

The Wandering Hearts

★★★

Mother

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL/LP

British folk-roots trio ponder maternal weight and wisdom on third LP. On the best songs (About America, Tired) acoustic guitar and subtle rhythms boost Tara Wilcox and Francesca Whiffin's luminous vocals with Simon & Garfunkel simplicity. *JB*

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My nation underground

The enigmatic Germany visionary's two finest albums get a welcome vinyl release. Mastered from the original analogue tapes. By **Andrew Male**.

Nico

★★★★★

The Marble Index/Desertshore

DOMINO. LP

IN PETER DOGGETT's exemplary linernotes to these reissues, he quotes an interview Nico gave shortly before her death in 1988, aged 49, where she explains her desire to make "archaic music… music you imagine from thousands of years ago. Cave music."

Many critics have referenced early church music in writing about *The Marble Index* and *Desertshore*, the two albums the former Velvet Underground singer recorded between 1968 and 1970, but this quote seems to suggest that the solo music composed by the woman born Christa Päffgen was reaching even further back to something ancient and primeval.

The roots of Nico's mysterious, visionary sound can be found in It Was A Pleasure Then, the closer on side one of her tentative 1967 debut, *Chelsea Girl*. While much of *Chelsea Girl* found Nico covering pretty compositions by Jackson Browne, Tim Hardin and Bob Dylan, this collaboration with former Velvet compatriots John Cale and Lou Reed was an eight-minute modal drone, Nico utilising her lowest vocal range to summon sinuous dreamlike images from deep inside herself, in search of something vast and eternal.

Composed in the bathtub of Factory alumnus Fred Hughes' East 16th Street New York apartment and on a portable harmonium purchased in San Francisco in 1967 ("I no longer have to rely on guitarists"), the songs for Nico's second LP, *The Marble Index*, continue this mythic quest.

Speaking to me in 2022, John Cale, arranger and de-facto producer on *The Marble Index*, said of Nico's compositions: "They create their own time. It's a strange world, a world of mystery, but it's real." It's also a world that requires some adjusting to.

Fittingly, *The Marble Index* opens with the pointedly pretty Prelude, an easeful acculturation to Nico and Cale's soundworld comprised of low-end piano, bells, celeste and guitar. This gives way to Lawns Of Dawns. Influenced by the lyrics of Jim Morrison, whom Nico had hung out with in the summer of 1967, Lawns Of Dawns is both a modal variation on the pagan round dance and a eulogy to LSD ("I cannot understand the way I feel/Until I rest on lawns of dawns").It ushers you, White Rabbit-like, into Nico's timeless new landscapes, like the complex waltz-like No One Is There, where Cale's pastoral string section lightly dances around Nico's low chimerical chants, and Ari's Song, a forlorn Blakean lullaby to her six-year-old son (who she'd sent to live with his father, the actor Alain Delon) that is also a love song to unconscious oblivion ("Only dreams can send you where you want to be").

Nico said of heroin (introduced to her by Chet Baker in 1964) "it is a seduction… like loving someone you hate", and *The Marble Index* works in similar fashion, enticing you in to a world both forbidding and enchanting. That mix of sensations is partly down to the limitations of Nico's harmonium. "It was not in tune with itself, or anything else," said Cale. As a result, he used bells, glockenspiel, mandolin and viola drones to "leaven out" the harmonium's unrelieved low chords and Nico's deep, weary contralto.

On the gorgeous, cinematic Frozen Warnings his harmonics add a rippling, horizonless vastness to Nico's gelid imagery, while on circular conjuration Evening Of Light, an album closer seemingly located on the edge of time itself, Cale colours the desolate landscapes with chiming layers of mandolin and groaning glaciers of overdubbed viola, placing the song somewhere between shimmering Arctic sunlight and perpetual midnight.

Barely half an hour in length, *The Marble Index* was mostly met with confusion on release. When Nico complained about Elektra's inability to market it, Cale simply replied, "Nico, how do you sell suicide?"

It sold hardly anything and in response Nico skipped the country and went travelling in Egypt, Rome and then Paris, where she met 20-year-old film-maker Philippe Garrel. The pair inspired each other. Garrel began work on a film, The Inner Scar, as homage to his new love, whilst Nico created a fresh set of songs, "a visual… visionary music" intended as a possible soundtrack.

Recorded with Cale and Joe Boyd for Reprise, *Desertshore* was an LP inspired by friends, family and lovers and, as such, possesses a more seductive, elegiac feel than *The Marble Index*. It's a downward spiral but one that invites you to fall into its chilly embrace and surrender.

But first, you must get beyond Janitor Of Lunacy. Part written for former lover Brian Jones, but also a possible paean to heroin, Janitor is an undulating gothic sea shanty, a declamatory prayer to a tyrannical entity that can "Revive the living dream/Forgive the begging scream". The song is also the album's own custodian. Listeners who never get beyond its frosty stentorian warning are denied the pleasures within, pleasures which begin with her song for Andy Warhol, The Falconer. Written following the attempted murder of the pop artist by Valerie Solanas, it's an admittedly sparse and forlorn number, made more unsettling by some sepulchral chain-clanging from Cale, but Nico's singing and her use of melody invest it with a curious warmth and compassion. Little on *The Marble Index* could be called pretty, but *Desertshore* is interspersed with moments of forlorn beauty. The first two are My Only Child, a song for Ari, in which the singer's vulnerable vocal is accompanied by interlacing choral harmonies, and the second is the heartbreaking yet terrifying Le Petit Chevalier, in which six-year-old Ari, accompanied by John Cale's plaintive harpsichord, sings, in halting French, "I am the little knight/With the sky above my eyes/I can't scare myself".

If anyone were to argue for the undeniable influence of Nico on post-punk they'd point you to side two of *Desertshore*, particularly the two songs Nico wrote for her mother: the roiling, cinematic Abschied (Farewell) and valedictory chorale Mütterlein. Interspersed between those two Gothic tempests sits what might arguably be Nico's most vulnerable and autobiographical compositions: Afraid, where against Cale's keening viola and church-hall upright piano a lonesome voice sings "You are beautiful and you are alone", and album closer All That Is My Own, a hibernal folk troika over which the singer intones "meet me on the desertshore". That antithetical location, where two vast spaces of emptiness meet, is Nicoworld, the music you imagine from thousands of years ago. Cave music.

"Nico summons dreamlike images from deep inside herself, in search of something vast and eternal."

Getty

BACK STORY: INDEX LINKED

● John Haeny (above), the engineer on *The Marble Index*, tried to get Nico to record her harmonium parts and her vocal separately but she was unable to sing without accompanying herself on the harmonium. Also, the singer had no fixed sense of rhythm or tempo and thought only in terms of the individual phrases of her songs. It's one of the reasons why her records sound so simultaneously ancient and unique.

Drone of interest: Nico reaches back to something ancient and primeval.

Sons of their fathers: Toumani Diabaté (right) and Ballaké Sissoko.

Toumani Diabaté With Ballaké Sissoko

★★★★★

New Ancient Strings

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL/LP

Landmark album of kora instrumentals – one of Björk's favourites.

In 1970, Sidiki Diabaté and Djelimadi Sissoko recorded *Cordes Anciennes*, the first collection of instrumental kora tunes – normally, the 21-string West African harp would accompany a griot singer – blowing away centuries of tradition yet sounding timeless. By 1999, their sons Toumani and Ballaké, cousins and neighbours in Bamako, had inherited the titles of finest kora players of their generation, with the former, in particular, having built a reputation for genre-straddling collaborations. Seeking to salute their dads yet showcase how much Malian music had developed since the pre-media age, the pair teamed with producer Lucy Durán for *New Ancient Strings*, a live, single-take album comprising eight Diabaté compositions based on older tunes. Bafoulabe may be the best cut with which to test the water, but you can dive in anywhere and your world will never be the same again. Now, as then, an utterly essential Malian album.

David Hutcheon

These Immortal Souls

★★★★

I'm Never Gonna Die Again

MUTE. CD/DL/LP

Out-of-time 1992 gem from Rowland S Howard's post-Birthday Party combo.

Shunned by Nick Cave while assembling his Bad Seeds, Howard cut a sorry figure fronting TIS. For 1987's messy debut, *Get Lost (Don't Lie)*, he was at best at the beginning of his vocal narrative; then, amid London heroin chaos documented in brother/bassist Harry Howard's candid linernotes, Rowland repurposed second-album material for a solo collaborative record with Nikki Sudden. By the time *I'm Never Gonna Die Again* surfaced circa grunge, its nocturnal romanticism was, as one gig heckler apparently noted, "as old as tie-dye". Removed from temporal concerns, however, the Souls sound on fire here, their lurching energies propelled by drummer Epic Soundtracks, sublimely by Genevieve McGuckin's keys, and sumptuously presented within John Rivers' production. Howard's guitar playing is electrifying (check surf instrumental Insomnicide!), his doomed vision on Crowned compulsive. RSH disciples should also seek outtakes comp *EXTRA*, with its persuasive cover of The Stooges' Open Up And Bleed.

Andrew Perry

Lucy Durán

The Twilight Singers

★★★★

Black Out The Windows/Ladies & Gentlemen, The Twilight Singers

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. LP

Luxury (£400!) 13-disc box for Greg Dulli's 'other band'.

Although The Twilight Singers made five albums between 2000 and 2011, Greg Dulli never truly escaped from the emotional bruise of his previous band, Ohio's Sub Pop-signed, Stax-inclined Afghan Whigs. So this lavish catalogue package, with its hefty book and bonus rarities disc, carries the whiff of legacy reclamation. Debut *Twilight*, produced with Hull electronica duo Fila Brazilia, saw mood trump melody, though Dulli's evocation of Van Morrison serenading an opium den was certainly plausible. Thereafter *Blackberry Belle* upgraded the self-love/loathing tension with interest – guests included Apollonia, Mark Lanegan and Kamasi Washington – and *She Loves You* celebrated Dulli's fearless appetite for a cover version (Coltrane's A Love Supreme?!), before *Powder Burns* established an equilibrium between Dulli's past and present vehicles, culminating in the outstanding *Dynamite Steps*. Dulli revived Afghan Whigs in 2012 but kept the Singers' cinematic scope and broader textural palette, suggesting he's happy living in the twilight zone.

Keith Cameron

Various

★★★★

They Move In The Night

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

Quirky compilation spans surf, rockabilly, Yugoslavian outsider folk and more.

A 'previously unissued soundtrack to a 1966 low budget noir' screams the blurb. Alas, there is no such movie – although Numero have gone to town with promotion for this excellent compilation, mocking up film posters and creating a trailer using snippets from 1950 B-movie Gun Crazy. And no wonder, for it deserves its film, an epic sense of drama throughout redolent of Ennio Morricone's spaghetti western scores. It opens with Branko Mataja's Tuzna Je Nedelija (Gloomy Sunday) from 1973, a ghostly beauty, all twanging guitars and low rumbling bass, and closes with Wasn't There, an unsettling lo-fi lament by X-Cetra, a pre-teen girl-group from 2000. In between are tracks such as Red Garrison & His Zodiacs' Taboo from 1960, and Jody Reynolds' 1961 Tarantula, which ramp up the tension, the first with twitching rockabilly, the second with a surf-styled instrumental full of sinister suspense.

Lois Wilson

Looper

★★★★

Up A Tree (25th Anniversary Edition)

MUTE. CD/DL

Belle & Sebastian offshoot's folk/laptop gems retain their wit and sparkle.

Conceived by original Belle & Sebastian member Stuart David and his wife Karn while the former was still in B&S, Looper's debut strapped gentle laptop electronica, built around playful loops and samples, onto homespun wistfulness. In doing so it presaged the lo-fi folktronica boom (see Four Tet, Caribou) of the early noughties. Guided by David's distinctive lyrical and vocal approach, many tracks – like the autobiographical Impossible Things #2, a twinkling, melodica-flecked telling of how the couple met – sound like mini short stories set to swaying beats and delivered in David's Clydeside brogue. A second disc has 'reimaginings' by Looper themselves, as well as the likes of Pulp who, credited as The Chocolate Layers, drop Up A Tree Again into a roiling vat of late-'90s indie dance tropes. But it's the album's 10 original tracks that remain a refreshing vitamin shot 25 years on.

Stephen Worthy

Anne Briggs

★★★★★

Anne Briggs

TOPIC. LP

Expanded edition of slow-burning trad classic.

"Getting Anne Briggs into a recording studio is like enticing a wild bird into a cage," wrote Bert Lloyd in his sleevenote to the Nottinghamshire singer's eternally sparkly 1971 debut LP. The wild child of the 1960s folk revival, Briggs' reputation as a stunning performer far exceeds her modest back catalogue, but these songs – including four previously unheard outtakes, notably Bruton Town and The Cruel Mother – explain exactly why she continues to be such a massive deal. Rapture upon rapture, her bouzouki-accompanied version of Willie O'Winsbury stands as one of the most arresting five minutes of anything ever, but her sublime phrasing on Blackwater Side, her moody rendition of Bert Jansch co-write Go Your Way and her own mantra-like Living By The Water run it fearsome close. Like Nick Drake, Briggs was a modest seller in her own time, but her cultural footprint is similarly colossal. Hear her once, hear her everywhere.

Jim Wirth

Various

★★★★

Heavy Kraut! Vol. 1: Wie der Hardrock nach Deutschland kam, 1970-1976

BEAR FAMILY. CD

Twenty-nine tracks of prime Deutsche heaviosity.

From the outset, West Germany loved rock'n'roll, and its Reeperbahn nightclubs helped train half the future British Invasion bands. It lacked the studios, labels and producers to really develop, but by 1970 things were changing. This excellent collection – with extensive German sleevenotes – focuses on bands who'd heard Zep or Sabbath and wanted to cut loose. Lucifer's Friend were fronted by English ex-pat John Lawton after he stayed on in 1969 following shows at Hamburg's Top Ten club, while Hairy Chapter changed their unsuccessful previous band name and LP cover photo, then hit big, selling the exact same recordings over again. Meanwhile, MOR duo Cindy & Bert cut Der Hund von Baskerville – a hugely satisfying Sherlock Holmes-themed version of Sabbath's Paranoid with superb backing from Würzburg beat combo the Jay Five. Stirring stuff.

Max Décharné

Eyes wide open: Andwella join the love parade.

Awakenings

Transplanted Northern Irish group's three albums, from prog/psych to early Americana. By Jon Savage.

Andwella

★★★★

To Dream

NUMERO GROUP. CD/DL/LP

SPANNING THE years 1969-71, *To Dream* charts the progress of Andwella, principally a vehicle for the prodigious teenage talent of David Lewis: only 18 when his first album was released. Leaving Belfast in 1967, Lewis participated in the first flush of psychedelia during a summer 1968 Jersey residency. Relocating to London, Andwella released three albums between 1969 and 1971: reflecting then current trends with a strong songwriter and guitarist, they act as a window into a misunderstood and, from today's perspective, slightly baffling era.

The first is the best. *Love And Poetry* (credited to Andwellas Dream) is a psych/prog tour de force, with crunching hard rockers (Sunday), Ray Davies-like character vignettes (Clockwork Man), ambient psych folk (Lost A Number Found A King), reworked blues standards (Cocaine), acoustic ballads with psych touches (Midday Sun) and an affectionate tribute to a friend (Felix) that climaxes in a phased wig-out. The guitar work is strong throughout, with frequent acidic flourishes; the lyrics are emotional and autobiographical.

Love And Poetry is long and perhaps a bit too stylistically disparate: whether it's worth the £2,000 very good condition copies now fetch is moot, but this is a worthwhile and important reissue. 1970's *World's End* is a very different beast: gone are the psychedelic touches and instead comes a funkier, rootsier approach suggested by David Lewis meeting The Band in late 1969. Named after the district in Chelsea where the group were living, the second album is a more cohesive, albeit downbeat listen.

Opener Hold On To Your Mind is a funky, conga-driven blast that became an early favourite of David Mancuso at his formative gay disco the Loft – it certainly fitted well into that club's loose, spacious imperative. There's several mid-paced songs (Lady Love; Back On The Road) but these are leavened by smart pacing: the bluesy instrumental Michael Fitzhenry breaks up the first side, while the full orchestrated World's End Part 1 provides an atmospheric, cinematic start to the old side two.

If *World's End* is a successful integration of a British psych/pop sensibility – especially in the arrangements – with contemporary Americana, then final album *People's People* shows the balance tipping into early-'70s world weary torpor: the Band influence is strong on songs like Are You Ready and Saint Bartholomew. Nevertheless, opener She Taught Me To Love is a rousing, infectious pop/rock tune, while The World Of Angelique and Lazy Days are attractive acoustic interludes.

Andwella's career ended in desperation: "This is my life and I'm trying to so hard," Lewis cracks on the closer All For You, "what else can I do?" David Lewis was a talented songwriter who captured the *Zeitgeist*: quite apart from any personal psychology, these albums act as a time capsule of that transitional moment when the possibilities of the 1960s flared for a moment, before depression and dues beckoned. However in 1975, his song for Demis Roussos, Happy To Be On An Island In The Sun, went to Number 1 all over Europe: that's called Pop Payback.

Fred Locks

★★★★

Black Star Liner

17 NORTH PARADE. LP

Landmark roots reggae from 1976 – remastered and back on vinyl.

Jamaican singer Stafford Elliot's journey to becoming cult reggae star Fred Locks was protracted to say the least. Starting in secondary school in the late '60s with The Flames, Elliot then joined The Lyrics and cut a bunch of 45s with producers Clement Dodd, Vincent Chin and Lee Perry, without much success. Disillusioned with the competitive JA music industry, the singer joined the Twelve Tribes Of Israel Rastafarian group, grew his dreads (hence the name) and retreated to living on the beach in Harbour View, where in 1975 he penned the strident roots anthem this Hugh Boothe-produced set takes its title from. *Black Star Liner*'s potent, Garveyite themes of black liberation and repatriation, delivered by Fred's expressive, distinctive vocal, was a big international hit on release and helped define roots reggae's 'golden era'. And nearly five decades on, *BSL* is still deserving of rediscovery.

Simon McEwen

Sun Ra

★★★★

Sun Ra At The Showcase: Live In Chicago (1976-1977)

JAZZ DETECTIVE. CD/DL

Afro-futurist pioneer blows Windy City crowds away.

Chicago had a special significance for pianist Herman Blount, who discarded his birth name while living there in 1952 to morph into Sun Ra, a cosmic messenger whose otherworldly music would extend the frontiers of jazz. Ra and his Arkestra left the Windy City in 1961 but, as this compilation of two unissued mid-'70s recordings vividly reveals, their live performances on their return always felt like homecoming celebrations. As you'd expect from Ra, the music here is anything but predictable, veering from the easy-on-the-ear swing jazz of Rose Room to the cacophonic chaos of Calling Planet Earth – The Shadow World, an eerie explosion of noise dominated by R2-D2-like bleeping synth chatter. The biggest highlight is a raucous version of Ra's signature tune, Space Is The Place, featuring Dale Williams' squally fuzz-toned electric guitar. A must-have for Ra devotees. (Also available as a limited-edition RSD LP).

Charles Waring

Majesty Crush

★★★

Butterflies Don't Go Away

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

Definitive anthology of Detroit shoegaze devotees.

Whereas British shoegazers tended towards the vaporous, American pedal-driven indie rock was typically more muscular. Heavy of bass line and frazzled of guitar, Detroit's Majesty Crush were somewhat grunge-adjacent, but their Anglophilia meant their time at the post-Nirvana feeding trough was brief. They split in 1995, by which time mercurial singer David Stroughter had been diagnosed as bipolar; he was killed in an altercation with police in 2017. This career-spanning compilation showcases a band that were melodically complex; tracks like the floor-shaking Grow betray a Spacemen 3-esque heft alongside abundant pop ambition and psychedelic fascination. Stroughter's lyrics, meanwhile, are always compelling: No. 1 Fan an unsettling portrait of obsession; Brand's tale of twentysomething disaffection and addiction. The tremolo-drenched tribute to Uma Thurman, meanwhile, remains a detail-perfect '90s artefact.

Stevie Chick

Isaac Hayes

★★★★

Hot Buttered Soul

CRAFT ENTERPRISE. LP

Collectable edition of Ike's second LP: if you don't have 90 quid to drop, walk on by.

Hayes' second album, recorded as part of Stax's 27-album push to rebuild its catalogue in 1969, was clearly individual and out-there, and wasn't expected to hit big. But the freedom and modernity Hayes accessed in the expansive arrangements – Harold Beane's stinging fuzz guitar during Walk On By, the audacious monologue taking up half of an 18-minute version of By The Time I Get To Phoenix, Ike's own unfettered organ and piano playing and the Bar-Kays' spare but steady grooves – immediately resonated with a wide audience and offered up new pathways for black music. Craft's small batch reissue series employs sonic fidelity guru Bernie Grundman as remastering engineer and a one-step lacquer-making process that results in superb clarity. It does, however, mean that this desirable cloth-bound edition (with lively linernotes by A. Scott Galloway) is both expensive and very limited.

Jim Irvin

Seoul power: Sanullim's (left) Kim Chang-wan and brother Chang-hoon bring the fuzzy psych in the late '70s.

FILE UNDER...

Pump up the volumes

The bookish catalogue of a Korean band of brothers. By Jim Irvin.

KOREAN STUDENT Kim Chang-wan was 17 and on his way to college in Seoul when he made an impulsive, life-changing decision. Near his bus stop, a music shop had a classical guitar in the window that caught his eye. He walked in and bought it for the equivalent of a month's wages from his part-time job. He didn't know how to hold it, tune it or anything, so he also purchased a pitch pipe and a guitar tutor. Back home, he sat strumming D for hours, transfixed by the sound. He started practising every day.

Older brother Chang-hoon also bought a guitar. Younger brother Chang-ik joined in, playing rudimentary drums with spoons on a book. The brothers formed a band called Mul, doing well enough in a local contest to attract a manager, who suggested the name change to Sanullim (Mountain Echo). It was a period when the ruling military regime was cracking down. Famous musicians were being imprisoned on drug charges or having their work banned. Korean rock was moribund.

When Chang-wan graduated he decided to record some of the songs they'd amassed, perhaps for a private press album, but a record company heard their demos and commissioned an album. Without really knowing what they were doing, the brothers went into a studio and, with cousin Kim Nan-sook on keyboards, recorded the nine tracks for their first LP, *Vol. 1: Already Now* ★★★★ (Guerssen). Chang-wan supplied a childish pastel-crayon portrait of the band to serve as the cover image.

Released in December 1977, it took South Korea by storm, selling a reported 400,000 copies, having a vivifying effect not unlike punk's in the UK, sounding like nothing Korea had heard before, neither '77 nor '67, but some dream-world meld of the two. Over time, the ingenuous enthusiasm of Sanullim's first three records, all released within a year, filtered through to fans of psych and garage in the West, occasional tracks appearing on crate-digging compilations.

Reissued often at home, those records haven't made much impact outside Korea beyond a devoted cult following listening to bootlegged or passed-around copies. Guerssen's Antoni Gorgues, an obsessive fan, wanted to change that. He says these new versions, the first reissues outside Korea (with very limited coloured editions too), remastered from the original tapes, sound even better than initial Korean pressings.

Already Now's title track is a pop song with springy bass, Farfisa organ, plishy cymbals and acid fuzz guitar that's more trapped wasp than metal beast (the fuzz pedal seems to be malfunctioning), Chang-wan's vocals wash over it in a metallic reverb. Likely Late Summer is a delicious slice of folk rock. The feel of this first record will be familiar if you've ever enjoyed any of the Cambodian bar-band pop recreated by acts like Dengue Fever.

Things fatten up for *Vol. 2: Spread Silk On My Heart* ★★★, which opens with three minutes of distant fuzzy soloing. The songs are hooky, the bass is tougher, though the drums still sometimes sound like spoons on a book. *Vol. 3: My Heart (My Soul Is A Wasteland)* ★★★★ ventures further out, closing with the side-long You Are Already Me, a freaky, fuzzy 18-minute excursion that reminded this column of Nektar. The series is rounded out by *Evening Breeze* ★★★★, an engaging double compilation of highlights from *Vols. 4-9*. The vocals are more urgent, the guitar more expansive, the drums finally sound decent.

"Sanullim's debut LP had a vivifying effect not unlike punk's in the UK."

There were 13 volumes in all, the last appearing in 1997, by which time only Chang-wan was still involved, his brothers having left music in the '80s. Revived for a 30th anniversary show in 2007, Sanullim was finally pronounced over when Chang-ik was killed in an accident in Canada in 2008. Chang-wan started a solo career and subsequently branched into TV, theatre and film as both actor and writer. But, fundamentally, that impulsive teenage buy kept him gainfully employed for over 40 years.

Straight outta Dunton Green: Orbital's Paul (left) and Phil Hartnoll, 1990.

Sandwell District

★★★★

Where Next?

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE RECORDING CO. DL/LP

Anglo-American collective's darkly intimate techno masterclass.

The title of this collection of coruscating techno from the early 20th century by Sandwell District now feels unbearably tragic. The sudden death of Juan Mendez, AKA Silent Servant, was announced weeks before its release. After a sustained hiatus, the four-man techno supergroup had announced festival appearances in summer 2024 – now, *Where Next?* feels like a grand tribute to Mendez, who was also responsible for Sandwell District's bleakly elegant visual identity. Whether in the oppressive early-hours roller Reykjavik, all trademark snaps, claps and foundation-shaking bass line, or Inter's chattering, melodic groove and the jacking intensity of Sampler 1 B1 (Regis Edit), the quartet balance peerless dancefloor sensibilities with home headphone listening intimacy. When it comes to intelligent, moving, visceral dance music, Sandwell District's legacy is surely set in stone.

Stephen Worthy

Orbital

★★★★★

Orbital

LONDON. CD/DL/LP

Game-changing 'Green LP' from 1991, with bells, whistles, VapoRub.

THREE YEARS on from the Second Summer of Love, the explosion of electronica around acid house was still widely regarded as kid's stuff, lacking in substance, when the Hartnoll brothers dropped this landmark debut LP. Even though Chime had dented the Top 20 in 1990, few foresaw the Kent-born siblings, or anyone else, making this dancefloor phenomenon workable at home. Quite literally, *Orbital* was the one that cracked it, paving the way for The Orb, Underworld and Warp's 'Electronic Listening' series. At 33 years' distance, it presents an irresistible blend of Detroit techno's sophistication (High Rise) and full-blooded acid pulsation (Fahrenheit 303), of Belfast's sublime elegy and Speed Freak's hilarious nosebleed rave. Diligently expanded here, the vinyl box cherry-picks bonuses, but the CD variant has it all – the Chime, Omen and Satan 12-inches, the better Mutations remixes and a no-holds-barred live disc, including the Butthole Surfers-sampling Satan and a mind-warping Son Of Chime.

Andrew Perry

Creation Rebel

★★★★

High Above Harlesden 1978-2023

ON-U SOUND. CD/DL/LP

North London dub reggae collective's output available in a 6-CD box or individually on vinyl.

Formed in 1978 and frequent backing (as The Arabs) for Jamaican toaster Prince Far-I, Creation Rebel were On-U producer Adrian Sherwood's first house band and now, after last year's outstanding comeback LP *Hostile Environment*, the longest-serving. This six-disc box amply showcases both CR's out-there dub experiments (raw debut *Dub From Creation* – made for £200 by an 18-year-old Sherwood; '79's solid *Rebel Vibrations*; '80's space-dub masterpiece *Starship Africa*) and more organic, vocal-led rootsy side ('82's *Psychotic Jonkanoo*, featuring John Lydon on 'backing harmony'; the aforementioned *Hostile Environment*), while On-U spotters will go directly to '78's super-rare Prince Jammy-mixed set, *Close Encounters Of The Third World*. Only 1982's *Lows & Highs* LP for Cherry Red is absent, but that doesn't detract from marvelling at Creation Rebel's consistently inventive, exploratory approach to rhythm and sound.

Simon McEwen

Martyn Goodacre

Giant Sand

★★★★

Chore Of Enchantment

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Nice work if you can get it: Tucson sage's 2000 album rises again.

You don't have to go too deep into *Chore Of Enchantment* before Howe Gelb starts pondering the return of Jesus. In another world, running a millennial cult out in the Arizona desert might have suited the wildly charismatic singer. Happily, from 1980 he dedicated his cosmic energies to Tucson collective Giant Sand, inadvertently staking out the boundaries of the '90s Americana boom before 2000's *Chore Of Enchantment* unexpectedly pulled up a couple of streets over from the mainstream. Unshowily experimental, it adds a few 'alts' in front of alt-country, Gelb and bandmates Joey Burns and John Convertino merging lovely, full-hearted songwriting with scruffy beats (Wolfy), space-age doo wop (Astonished (In Memphis)) and railroad punk (Satellite). There are also moments of absolute clarity, like the beautiful Shiver, yearning for transcendence. Impossible, maybe, but with *Chore Of Enchantment*, Gelb comes closer than most.

Victoria Segal

Manic Street Preachers

★★★

Lifeblood

SONY. CD/DL/LP

Manics' unloved seventh album gets the box set treatment.

Previously dismissed by James Dean Bradfield as "an experiment that didn't work", *Lifeblood* has always been the runt of the Manics' catalogue. But while the singer/guitarist felt that the record was triple-guessed and overworked, even with the support of perspective-lending producers Tony Visconti and Greg Haver, time has in fact been kind to the 2004 album, perhaps due to the paring down of the rock guitars revealing cleaner lines in the production. If originally inspired by '80s art pop – the New Order contours of 1985, the Associates visiting Wigan Casino in Empty Souls – the results often sound surprisingly contemporary. A three-disc version tracks the record's progress through demos (a live rehearsal of The Love Of Richard Nixon revealing Cure-ish tones), while 1985 is remixed by both Steven Wilson and Gwenno as, respectively, a synth-pop banger and trance anthem.

Tom Doyle

Various

★★★★

Beehive Breaks

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

Rare sister funk from the Numero reissue archive.

There's a yelp then a warning to "Watch the dog", then a full-blown scream. So begins Sandy Gaye's Watch The Dog That Bring The Bone, an irrepressible wave of Atlanta funk with thudding bass, scratchy guitar and studded brass. Written by Richard 'Funky Four Corners' Marks, it's just one of many fantastic tracks collected on *Beehive Breaks*, Numero's guide to late-'60s-to-mid-'70s sister funk. Also included are Betty Wright's Mr Lucky and Marva Whitney's Daddy Don't Know About Sugar Bear, the first a funk noir replete with gun shots, the second a raw, strident shout. The remainder, meanwhile, come from more obscure voices; such as high school outfit The Trinikas, whose 1969's Remember Me is a pleading lament set to a propulsive backbeat, and Houston's Fay Cooper, whose Closer Together is tough R&B with a bluesy vocal.

Lois Wilson

Delroy Wilson

★★★

Sarge

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

Self-appointed Cool Operator's mid-'70s reggae-soul highlight.

After scoring 1960s hits as Studio One's first child star, Wilson's voice matured for sufferers cuts like 1971's Better Must Come, an election-winning anthem for Michael Manley's left-wing PNP. Though Wilson resisted Rastafarianism, and his reputation was tarnished by The Clash's (White Man) In Hammersmith Palais which called him out as an insufficiently "roots rock rebel" singer who didn't "have anything to say", his appeal amongst fans of soulful singers like Toots Hibbert and John Holt only multiplied through the 'outernational' late-'70s. After teaming up with producer Lloyd Charmers, Wilson peaked with 1976's *Sarge*, trading strongly on covers. His achingly voiced tilt at The Wailers' I'm Still Waiting is a beauty; his hammy Green, Green Grass Of Home, conversely, pales alongside Tom Jones's. Disc two brings welcome depth via 1972's Charmers-produced *Boothe Unlimited*, boasting dub-heavy discomixes. Further 12-inch excursions thunderously supplement each disc.

Andrew Perry

Across the tracks: Stan Ridgway turns up the heat in 1986.

Burnt Offering

This month's M.I.A jewel: fugitives on the lam, hardboiled ear-movies and a ghostly Marine.

Stan Ridgway
The Big Heat

IRS, 1986

BARSTOW-RAISED Stanard Ridgway fronted LA eccentrics Wall Of Voodoo, whose malarial MTV hit Mexican Radio promised great things in March '83. But two months later at Steve Wozniak's US Festival folly in San Bernadino – a few hours before The Clash's last gig with Mick Jones – Ridgway played his final show with the group.

"I felt the band had been taken over by the record company," says Ridgway today. "They put us on the road for nine, 10 months, and then said, 'Do it again'. Everybody was pretty burned out, and I felt a lot of weirdness because of my status as the singer, you know – 'Who does he think he is?!' There was lots of dysfunction and things just weren't fixable. I remember going to the label and saying, I think we need a break. And I just got crickets."

Ridgway resigned from the group, but he could not so easily leave Miles Copeland's IRS imprint, who weren't pleased he'd walked from Wall Of Voodoo. Consequently, recording sessions for his first LP stretched over two years, though his first name release would be Don't Box Me In, a co-credit with Police drummer Stewart Copeland from the soundtrack of Francis Ford Coppola's film Rumble Fish in late '83.

In April '85 his debut single The Big Heat/Drive, She Said registered on the UK indie charts. Taut, sinister rock with synthesizers, both presented panicked vignettes, respectively of a possibly post-apocalyptic manhunt and a hapless taxi driver with a lady bank robber in his cab.

"[UK studio eminence] Hugh Jones produced those two songs at The Lighthouse in north Hollywood on the record company's dime," says Ridgway. "I was very happy with what he was doing and said, Let's get Hugh Jones back here and finish the rest of this record. There was just silence from the record company." One memorable response did come back, though. "In Drive, She Said there's a breakdown in the middle, a kind of surrealistic fever dream that our narrator is going through," says Ridgway. "Someone said, 'Gosh, do you think that part should be there? Won't people stop dancing?'"

Instead, work on the album that became *The Big Heat* continued piecemeal, with production credits going to Joe Chiccarelli and Mitchell Froom as well as Ridgway and his studio partner Louis van den Berg, at LA spaces numbering Fiddler's Studio and J.C. Studios as well as The Lighthouse. Guest players included Minuteman Mike Watt and Gang Of Four's Hugo Burnham ("great chaps all!" says Stan). Before *The Big Heat*'s spring 1986 release, album track Pick It Up (And Put It In Your Pocket) appeared on the Miami Vice episode Phil The Shill on December 13, 1985. "I had to battle and push a lot to get things done," says Ridgway. "In fact, I think I'm still suffering from some PTSD from the whole experience!"

Yet, named for Fritz Lang's celebrated movie of 1953, and with moody sleeve art photographed by the late Scott Lindgren in the industrial town of Vernon, California, *The Big Heat* would transcend its troubled creation. Its authorial stance has been compared to Raymonds Carver and Chandler – or maybe it's like the American grotesques of artist Drew Friedman as scripted by roughneck crime novelist Charles Willeford – with desperate situations chewed over by seen-it-all yet empathic narrator Stan. Following the title track's paranoid chase, Pick It Up (And Put It In Your Pocket) ("or somebody else will") is a Reaganite middle finger to everyone; Can't Stop The Show finds voyeurs, small businessmen and strippers trying to figure things out at a down-at-heel peep show, while luckless jazz mooch Walkin' Home Alone, as memorably performed on Channel 4's The Tube, anatomises a relationship that died. "The best stories are about people in desperate straits," says Ridgway. "One of my favourite movies is The Treasure Of The Sierra Madre, those people are pretty desperate. It's how people prevail – bad things have happened, but I'm going forward anyway."

It closes with combat ghost story Camouflage, a relative of Red Sovine's spectral trucker fave Phantom 909. Ridgway says it was partially inspired by An Occurrence At Owl Creek Bridge, a 1962 episode of The Twilight Zone based on an 1890 Ambrose Bierce short story, and by a relative who'd served in Vietnam. In August '86, it was a surprise Top 5 entry in the UK. "I'd never thought that it was going to be a, quote, hit," says Ridgway, who played the song twice on Top Of The Pops. "At first all that was great, you know, but it kind of went a little too far. At one point, I found myself on some sort of morning show, baking cake or something… I remember thinking to myself, Would Lou Reed do this?"

There were no more chart hits, but with his partner Pietra Wexstun, Ridgway continues to explore and refine his cine-noir approach, and all of his albums are worth investigating (intrigued? Try '89's *Mosquitos* or 2004's *Snakebite: Blacktop Ballads & Fugitive Songs*). Yet he grants that *The Big Heat* "was really a very important record for me. I had a lot to prove. I worked very hard on the writing, so, you get into that space where the music itself can provide pictures in the mind, which then enhance the music."

But how adjacent has he been to those last-chance scenarios he writes about? "I can tell you unequivocally that I've never robbed a bank," says Ridgway, "but I have driven a cab."

Ian Harrison

Visit Stan Ridgway at stanridgway1.bandcamp.com/music

CREDITS

Tracks: The Big Heat/Pick It Up (And Put It In Your Pocket)/Can't Stop The Show/Pile Driver/Walkin' Home Alone/Drive, She Said/Salesman/Twisted/Camouflage

Personnel: Stan Ridgway (lead vocals, harmonica, guitar, keys, banjo, bass); Mike Watt, Luis Cabaza, Mark Terlizzi (bass); Bill Noland, John Dentino, Louis van den Berg (keyboards); K.K. Barrett, Chris Becerra, Joe Berardi, Bruce Zelesnik (drums); Hugo Burnham, Steve Reid, Tom Rechoin (percussion); Bruce Fowler (trombone); Mark Cohen (banjo); Pietra Wexstun, Mark Lewis, Mark Morris, Joe Ramirez (backing vocals); Eric Williams (guitar feedback); Richard Gibbs (instruments); various string players

Producers: Joe Chiccarelli, Mitchell Froom, Hugh Jones, Bill Noland, Stan Ridgway, Louis van den Berg

Released: Spring 1986

Recorded: Fiddler's Studio, J.C. Studios, The Lighthouse, Hollywood, Los Angeles

Current availability: streaming services

"The best stories are about people in desperate straits."
STAN RIDGWAY

Getty

Sonny Rollins

★★★★

A Night At The Village Vanguard: The Complete Masters

BLUE NOTE/TONE POET. CD/LP

The sax colossus's landmark 1957 live trio set across two CDs and three LPs.

When Sonny Rollins debuted his new quintet at The Village Vanguard on October 15, 1957 he fired them all that same night. Recently voted the best new star by Downbeat magazine, Rollins was feeling the pressure. With a live Blue Note session booked for November 3, the 27-year-old saxophonist quickly assembled a piano-less trio for the first matinee, comprising bassist Donald Bailey and 19-year-old Pete La Roca on drums. For the evening session the fretful Rollins assembled another trio: Wilbur Ware on bass and a half-cut Elvin Jones playing La Roca's kit. That unrehearsed session comprises the majority of the expanded set here and it's a revelation. As recorded by Rudy Van Gelder, it's a spontaneous, impromptu mix of standards and originals that moves beyond muscular '50s bop into something that is both spare and exploratory yet simultaneously warm and embracing. Glorious stuff.

Andrew Male

Heldon

★★★

Electronique Guerilla

BUREAU B. LP

Fiftieth anniversary repress of 1974 debut from French space rock pioneer Richard Pinhas.

Richard Pinhas was on his way to becoming a full-time philosopher when Heldon spun him off course. Despite muted label interest, Pinhas elected to self-release Heldon's debut, a futurist symphony that layered self-played motifs from his Gibson Les Paul and EMS Synthi AKS. The helicoptering oscillations of Back To Heldon and controlled cacophony of Circulus Vitiosus are built around the minimalist evolution of vaporous synth riffs, Pinhas offsetting overlapping patterns and bass drones with unashamedly Fripp-inspired fretwork. It's a formula that's flipped amid the slow-rolling drums and Nietzsche recitations of Ouais, Marchais, Mieux Qu'en 68, and picked, folky figure of Northernland Lady. It may not be as accomplished as later efforts *Un Rêve Sans Conséquence Spéciale* (1976) or *Interface* (1977), but its raw power is undiminished.

Andy Cowan

Faust

★★★★

Momentaufnahme III

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

Krautrockers' third set of classic era, early '70s outtakes and radio sessions.

The most unfathomable of Germany's prog bands, Faust, like Can, had their own studio in Wümme, near Bremen, and producer Uwe Nettelbeck would edit down their releases from hours of improvisations, often preferring birdsong, or someone rummaging in a cupboard, over actual music. Listening to '73's *The Faust Tapes*, you just knew these Franco-Teutonic eccentrics must've left treasures on the cutting-room floor, and indeed 2021's *1971-1974* box set featured unreleased fifth album *Punkt*, plus two CDs subtitled *Momentaufnahme I* and *II*. This stand-alone third instalment carries further treats, such as *Faust IV*'s Giggy Smile minus the unrehearsed chorus, its nuttily ascending melody picked out on electric guitar, and Krautrock (the track which 'validated' the uncomfortable genre name) blasted forth in a thunderous 12-minute BBC version. Airtime is still characteristically afforded to snippets of muffled arrhythmic drumming, but *Momentaufnahme IV* also comes recommended, highlights including the meandering Eno-scape, Woke Up Outside The Dustbin.

Andrew Perry

Opa

★★★

Back Home

FAR OUT RECORDINGS. CD/LP

Lost 1975 debut by Uruguayan fusion band.

After playing in beat group Los Shakers, brothers Hugo and Osvaldo Fattoruso moved to New York in the early 1970s, forming jazz-funk fusion band Opa with bassist Ringo Thielmann, Hugo's keyboard flurries bringing shades of psychedelic rock shades. After backing Airto Moreira on the *Fingers* LP, the band cut *Back Home* on a Teac 4-track under Larry Rosen's direction in 1975. Early versions of Goldenwings and African Bird have plenty of rhythmic energy and melodic complexity, as does Brooklynville, and there's an engaging adaptation of Edu Lobo's boss gem Casa Forte, but awkward vocals detract from One + One + One Is Two, and a messy take of The Jackson 5's Never Can Say Goodbye is a perplexing tangent. Yet overall the good outweighs the bad, despite the rough edges.

David Katz

Holy communion: Alice Coltrane, with her guru Swami Satchidananda, gets intense in 1971.

Manhattan transcend

Remastered landmark concert finally gets an official release. By Andrew Male.

Alice Coltrane

★★★★★

The Carnegie Hall Concert

IMPULSE. CD/DL/LP

WHEN ALICE Coltrane took the stage at New York's Carnegie Hall on February 21, 1971 she'd just returned from a five-week sojourn in India where she'd swum in the Ganges, visited the holy city of Rishikesh, and found a certain kind of peace, a salve to the pain she'd been experiencing since the death of her husband, John, in 1967. As quoted by Lauren Du Graf in the long-form essay that accompanies this release, Coltrane said, "The trip to the East gave me the spiritual motivation to come out more – to do more with my music." Part of a series of benefit performances to raise money for her guru, Swami Satchidananda, the Carnegie Hall concert finds Coltrane in an intense state of divine liberation.

Playing with an expanded double quartet comprised of Pharoah Sanders and Archie Shepp on tenor and soprano sax, Jimmy Garrison and Cecil McBee on bass, Ed Blackwell and Clifford Jarvis on drums, plus Swami Satchidananda followers Tulsi Reynolds and Kumar Kramer on tamboura and harmonium, Coltrane sets off proceedings with a new composition, Journey In Satchidananda, from her recently released fifth studio LP. It begins as a heavy, creaking procession anchored in slow contemplation by bowed and plucked bass and chiming cymbals before Coltrane's cascading harp glissandos and Pharoah Sanders' breathy, keening flute fill the groove with layers of bright, glistening sunlight. Then, Archie Shepp's soprano sax breaks through with a high, hovering gospel-blues wail. It's a massing of the troops, an indication of just what this double-quartet are capable of. Another harp number, Shiva-Loka, goes deep into a world of slow, ethereal meditation, the percussive, double-kit groove of Blackwell and Jarvis locked in conversational communion as Shepp and Sanders' soprano saxes chatter and cry over the surface.

However, little prepares us for the epic, half-hour version of John Coltrane's Africa that follows. Beginning with a Blackwell and Jarvis floor-tom battle, Coltrane's agitated, roiling keyboard chimes are soon interlaced with wild-free blowing from Sanders and Shepp in an extended act of screeching liberation that is simultaneously joyous and terrifying. Ultimately, it feels like a cabalistic mass, a summoning of the spirit of John Coltrane and Africa itself. Defined by an hypnotic 10-minute bass solo, McBee hands over to Garrison who imitates the vocal cadences of the Nigerian talking drum before all nine players return for a wailing Africa coda and a barnstorming, funk-heavy and utterly free rendering of John Coltrane's 1966 composition, Leo. Remastered from Ed Michel's 2-track "reference mix" (after both 4-track masters were lost), *The Carnegie Hall Concert* now sounds magnificent despite a few rare spots of distortion. What began as a benefit for Swami Satchidananda and evolved into a summoning of John Coltrane's spirit now stands as a tribute to the liberating force of Alice Coltrane herself. It's a communion. Drink deep.

© Satchidananda Ashram–Yogaville®

Top brass: Pretenders in 1979 (from left) Pete Farndon, Chrissie Hynde, James Honeyman-Scott and Martin Chambers.

Pretenders

The towering talent of Chrissie Hynde.

By Tom Doyle.

CHRISSIE HYNDE has always gone her own way and, as a result, stood apart. Not for her a guitar, but a baritone ukulele when learning to play as a 14-year-old in her bedroom in Akron, Ohio. Still, the chances of actual success in a group seemed a remote possibility. "Like saying, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great to play baseball?'" she told MOJO in 2014.

Hynde moved to the UK in 1973, wrote for the music press, worked at McLaren and Westwood's SEX shop, played with Johnny Moped and Mick Jones, but struggled to make inroads into the music scene, partly because her songs came from another stylistic place. "I was a little too musical for that punk scene," she reflected. "I came here talking about Bobby Womack and they'd just seen Mott The Hoople."

After she met Hereford musicians James Honeyman-Scott (guitar) and Pete Farndon (bass), the Pretenders were born, solidified by drummer Martin Chambers. The band found an audience with 1979's cover of The Kinks' Stop Your Sobbing, followed a year later by their Number 1 *Pretenders* debut album.

When Honeyman-Scott and Farndon both met drug-related deaths within 10 months in 1982-3, Hynde rebuilt the band. "I dealt with it the way people deal with things when they have no choice," she offered. "There's no point in saying it was brave. What else can you do?"

Hynde's perseverance paid off with 1984's *Learning To Crawl*, but from that point on, the Pretenders became an amorphous outfit, or a trading name for Hynde's solo career, officially launched in 2014 with *Stockholm*.

A freshly inspired new line-up featuring Muswell Hill guitarist James Walbourne has returned the Pretenders to top form. Their 2023 Glastonbury set was a festival highlight, with Dave Grohl and Johnny Marr guesting and Paul McCartney admiring from the wings.

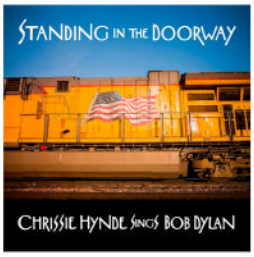
Although typically self-effacing about her songwriting and singing – despite having perhaps the greatest vibrato in rock – Hynde's catalogue proves her to be a towering talent and dogged individualist.

> **"I was a little too musical for the punk scene."**
> CHRISSIE HYNDE

Fin Costello/Getty, Getty

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Pretenders LPs. Next month we want your Curtis Mayfield Top 10. Send selections via X, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Curtis Mayfield' and we'll print the best comments.



10 Chrissie Hynde
Standing In The Doorway: Chrissie Hynde Sings Bob Dylan

BMG, 2021

You say: "Always a brilliant interpreter of other people's material, Chrissie tackles the songbook of the great master." Kieran Heneghan, via mojo4music.com

Inspired by Bob Dylan's 2020 release of Murder Most Foul, Chrissie Hynde and Pretenders guitarist James Walbourne embarked upon the Dylan Lockdown Series project, releasing home-recorded versions of her favourite Bob tunes, including previously unloved compositions such as In The Summertime from *Shot Of Love*. Elsewhere she lent *that* voice to a truly haunting Blind Willie McTell, explored the spiritual dimensions of Every Grain Of Sand, and made You're A Big Girl Now sound like a note-to-self.

4 Pretenders
Relentless

PARLOPHONE, 2023

You say: "In an era when artists in Chrissie's demographic are releasing greatest hits packages every year, she's whipping out the best songs of her career." Sj Karlsen, via Facebook

The Pretenders' latest was up there with their very best. If ennui was evident in the lyric of Losing My Sense Of Taste ("I don't even care about rock'n'roll"), then its swagger and layers of distortion spoke of renewal. Elsewhere, Hynde drowned in nostalgia. The Copa channelled Roy Orbison in its smoky atmosphere, while the beautifully evocative Promise Of Love time-slipped back to an affair begun in "the Orlando Hotel in late November/Snow on the ground". The closer, I Think About You Daily, was filled with sadness and remorse, the slow-moving weather patterns of the string arrangement scored by a guesting Jonny Greenwood.

9 Pretenders
Hate For Sale

BMG, 2020

You say: "The start of the Pretenders' creative renaissance… it rocks as hard as any of the early albums." Dave Tomlinson, via mojo4music.com

The LP that bridged the Pretenders' past and future: the last (to date, at least) with drummer Martin Chambers and the first co-written with James Walbourne. The super-fuzzy title track paid homage to The Damned, and The White Stripes-ish Junkie Walk took a tongue-in-cheek, blackly humorous attitude to an anti-hard drugs message. But there were also joyful indications that the Hynde/Walbourne partnership could produce top-drawer songs that could match anything ever released under the band's name: including the Kid-like chiming glory of The Buzz, the slow-burning soul of You Can't Hurt A Fool and gum-chewing glam stomper Turf Accountant Daddy.

8 Chrissie Hynde
Stockholm

CAROLINE, 2014

You say: "It flew under the radar, but Chrissie Hynde's first solo album is a cracker. Guitar pop of the highest order." Craig Stevens, via e-mail

Hynde always resisted going solo, but in 2014 she relented, calling the move "a bargaining chip" – ie, one that might attract more attention to the album. If in the end *Stockholm* wasn't a huge hit, it was a productive experiment. Recorded in the titular location and mostly co-written/produced by Björn Yttling of Peter, Björn & John, it moved between tight, Cars-ish new wave (Dark Sunglasses), '60 roadhouse country pop (A Plan Too Far) and louche rock on Down The Wrong Way, with grinding electric guitar provided by Neil Young. Hynde remained such a fan that she pocketed the plectrum he left behind on the mixing console.

7 Pretenders
Break Up The Concrete

SHANGRI-LA, 2008

You say: "Chrissie went full Americana with what was her best set of songs in years." Carla Brown, via e-mail

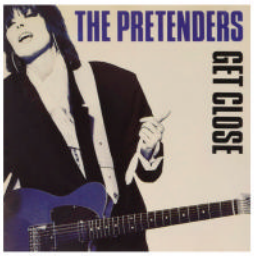
Recorded in Hollywood with a version of the Pretenders that featured Jim Keltner on drums and introduced new guitarist James Walbourne, the title of *Break Up The Concrete* promoted eco vandalism, while its sound stripped away any last traces of post-punk. Ballads such as the swoony Love's A Mystery and The Nothing Maker planted themselves firmly in country rock terrain, while the rockers were of the roots variety: Don't Cut Your Hair saw Chrissie spluttering like Sun-era Elvis while the title track was a slapback echoing homage to Bo Diddley. Best of all, perhaps, was the knowingly named, '66 Dylan amphetamine rattle of Boots Of Chinese Plastic.

6 Pretenders
Alone

BMG, 2016

You say: "The recent albums have been very good… *Alone* being one of my personal favourites." Barry Gibson, via Facebook

The Pretenders at this stage basically involved Hynde and anyone else she fancied collaborating with. And so it was an inspired move for her to hook up in Nashville with fellow Akron, Ohio escapee, Dan Auerbach, who supplied most of his band The Arcs and called up assorted Tennessee sessioneers. If *Alone* at times simply sounded like Hynde fronting The Black Keys, it was a good, energising thing. Gotta Wait thumped along magnificently and Never Be Together featured a twanging guitar cameo from Duane Eddy. In the title track the singer roamed the streets, Iggy-ishly declaring, "I like being alone… what are you gonna do about it? Hmm? Absolutely fuck all."



5 Pretenders
Get Close

REAL, 1986

You say: "An embarrassment of riches, especially Don't Get Me Wrong when Chrissie sings that gorgeous gliss…" @SlowBoatRecords, via X

By the mid '80s the strain of keeping a trad band together was beginning to show and Hynde sacked Martin Chambers, due to his drumming being in her opinion "crap" (although she acknowledged that this may have been due to the lasting trauma of losing Farndon and Honeyman-Scott). *Get Close* ambitiously featured a cast of name producers (Steve Lillywhite, Bob Clearmountain, Jimmy Iovine) and an even bigger pool of musicians, from The Attractions' bassist Bruce Thomas to Simple Minds drummer Mel Gaynor. The result was a polished, Americanised sound that kept the hits – Hymn To Her; Don't Get Me Wrong – coming. Closed with a synthy take on Hendrix's Room Full Of Mirrors that pre-echoed rave.

3 Pretenders
Pretenders II

REAL, 1981

You say: "James Honeyman-Scott was Johnny Marr before Johnny Marr." John Hunter @johnhunter38655, via X

Blindsided by sudden success, the Pretenders took 18 months – a release schedule age back then – to put out their second album. When it arrived, it seemed to have traced the blueprint of its predecessor, albeit elegantly. The sexual energy of their debut was tackled more playfully with Bad Boys Get Spanked, and their second Ray Davies cover, I Go To Sleep, was an aching reading of a song that was still at the time an unreleased demo. Hynde has stated that Talk Of The Town concerned her guilt regarding a Pretenders fan she didn't engage with, but it was almost impossible not to read it as detailing the tattle surrounding her relationship with Davies.

2 Pretenders
Learning To Crawl

REAL, 1984

You say: "Beautifully captured the raw verve of the first two albums and refined it into something tougher and slicker." Mark Elvin, via Facebook

Its title fittingly inspired by Hynde watching her baby daughter Natalie's development, *Learning To Crawl* was all about (difficult) forward motion. Rebuilding the shattered Pretenders from half a band, she and Martin Chambers first recorded the lamenting, angry yet resigned Back On The Chain Gang with Rockpile guitarist Billy Bremner and Big Country bassist Tony Butler. The surviving bandmates then recruited guitarist Robbie McIntosh (a friend of Honeyman-Scott) and bassist Malcolm Foster for the line-up that recorded the remainder of a brilliant, defiant album, which rocked harder than ever (Middle Of The Road) and even produced a Christmas standard with 2000 Miles.

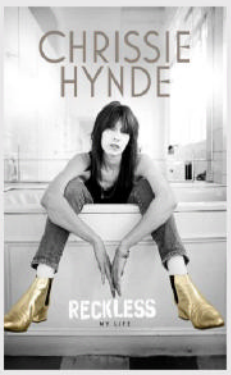
Pretenders
Pretenders

REAL, 1980

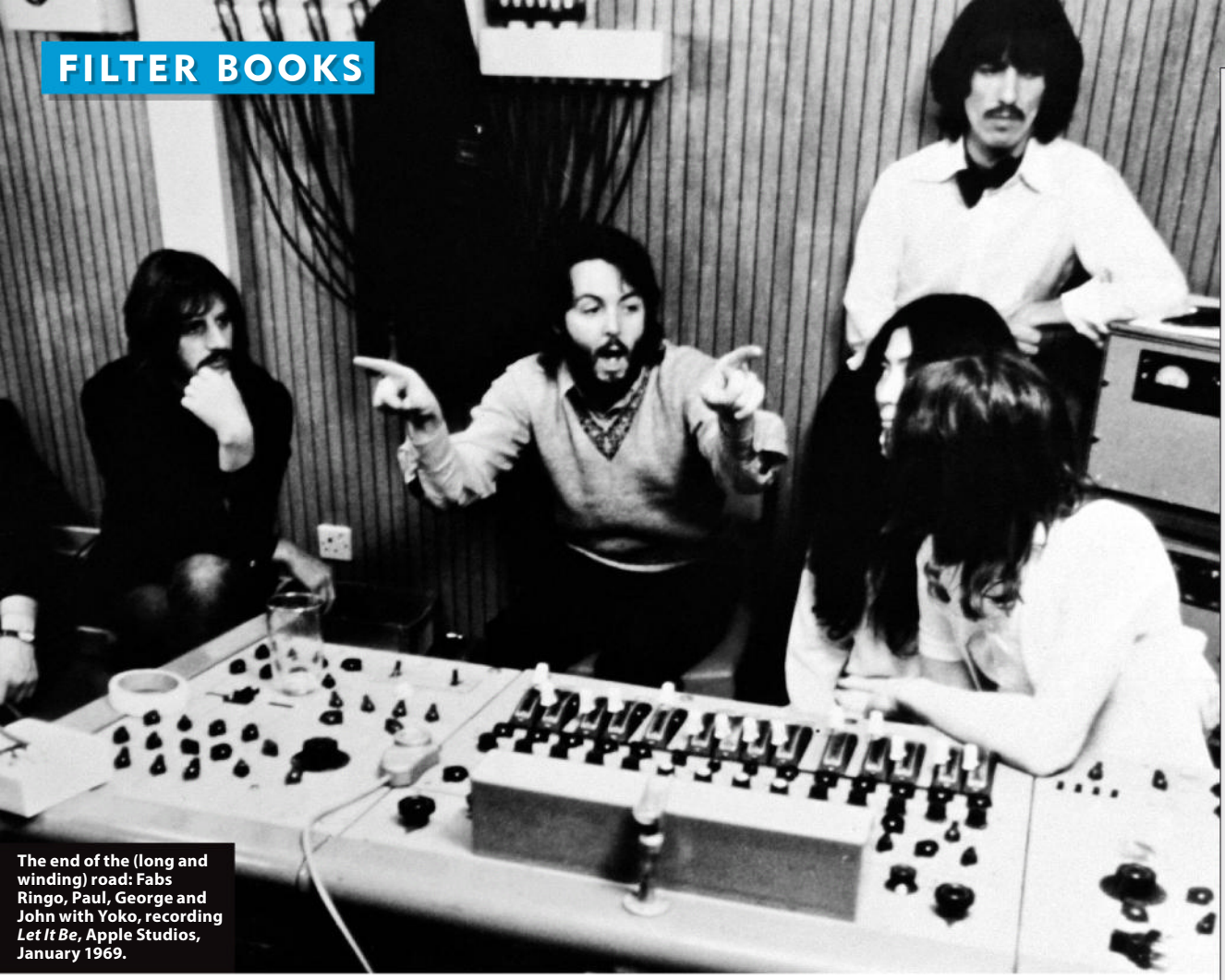
You say: "The fresh energy and blistering time signatures of the Pretenders' debut album are as thrilling today as in 1980. Chrissie's was a gorgeously original tremulous rock voice…" LibraryFiend @LibraryFiend, via X

Arriving fully formed, the band who made *Pretenders* helped to reshape the post-punk landscape with songs that were both propulsive and poppy. Rock credentials were foregrounded on side one with a run of four tracks, from The Clash-y Precious to the twisty Tattooed Love Boys with its graphic depiction of sexual assault, which the publication of Hynde's 2015 memoir Reckless revealed to be horrifically real. Side two was where the melodic gold was to be found, from the yearning Lovers Of Today and Kid to the dubby putdown Private Life and, of course, Brass In Pocket, the single that Hynde didn't want to release (she recalled to MOJO she'd said, "That record goes out over my dead body…"), yet was so universally irresistible it went to Number 1.

NOW DIG THIS



While patchy, 1994's *Last Of The Independents* does feature I'll Stand By You, the modern standard that – like Brass In Pocket – Hynde was originally reluctant to put out. Further spotlighting her unique vocal stylings was 2019's *Valve Bone Woe*, a jazzy covers album that found dub depths in Caroline, No and Wild Is The Wind. The singer's 2015 autobiography Reckless is essential reading for its candour and attitude, while the 1982 US-released *Live At The Santa Monica Civic* (featured on the 2006 deluxe version of *Pretenders II*) is a thrilling concert document of the original line-up. For proof of the Pretenders' hit-making greatness, 1987's *The Singles* remains the greatest compilation.



The end of the (long and winding) road: Fabs Ringo, Paul, George and John with Yoko, recording *Let It Be*, Apple Studios, January 1969.

Things we said today

Gossipy, insider oral history constructed from interviews for 1983's Beatle-baiting The Love You Make. By Mat Snow.

All You Need Is Love: The End Of The Beatles

★★★★

Peter Brown and Steven Gaines

OCTOPUS. £25

IN 1983, A MIXED reception greeted The Love You Make by Brian Epstein's management assistant Peter Brown, of The Ballad Of John And Yoko fame, and writer Steven Gaines. Mocked as 'The Muck You Rake', the book was based on interviews conducted in 1980 with almost every A-lister except Lennon, murdered that December; months later, the widowed Yoko had her say. From this prime source material the authors spun an account long on sensation, short on nuance and non-existent on the actual music; Paul and Linda McCartney ceremonially burnt their copy.

Four decades on, we now have a better book: the original unfiltered interviews, including Peter Brown as just one more witness. Recalled with the split still reverberating, unresolved grievances are aired and scores settled, but recrimination is tempered with perspective all the more clear-eyed for being untinted by our latterday rosy glow.

This is no complete oral history, however. For all the access, the interviewees were busy, time-poor people, a few clearly, as in Fabs press officer Derek Taylor, well lunched up: "All but one of those fellows who came to lunch [with Peter Brown] was a poofter… what I call Bertie Woofters… They always liked me… I'm not a bigot, you see. Always a liberal."

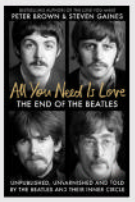
That four straight "macho Northern men" – even the sometimes viciously provocative Lennon – were so genuinely relaxed in their management team's gay milieu is one of the book's strongest themes. Another is how after Brian Epstein died there was no natural interface between the dissonant mindsets of art and money. "One thing I would have done differently with John, I would have presented him with a bag of money every once in a while," recalled former Apple Records president (and the third Mr Joan Collins) Ron Kass. "Money invested was too abstract for him. It was my fault instilling in them a sophistication which they did not have… guys from Liverpool that haven't had any kind of an education." For anyone lacking a business education, the material here about contracts, NEMS, Northern Songs, Apple and ABKCO is indeed bewildering, especially when Allen Klein is talking.

A third, perhaps overexplored theme is 'Magic' Alex Mardas, like so many charlatans a fascinatingly complex character, a bit player as vivid as the stars.

The fourth theme – perhaps oversold in the book's subtitle The End Of The Beatles to capitalise on the post-Get Back reheating of pop's equivalent to the causes of the First World War – is not explored forensically, as Daniel Rachel has done in the counterfactual Lost Album Of The Beatles. But a lot of talk is weighted towards the end rather than the beginning.

Few now would argue with 1980's insider consensus: with the death of Brian Epstein was lost any hope of a workable structure to reconcile and foster both collective and individual energies; Yoko and Linda supplied John and Paul with meaningful structure to their lives but not their Beatles careers; Klein took a bad situation and made it worse. But by then "it was time for everybody," in Ringo's words. "Still the best band that ever was."

> "Four decades on, we now have a better book, with the original unfiltered interviews."



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- On holiday on Macca's Scottish farm with Paul and girlfriend Jane Asher, management Mr Fixit Alistair Taylor was given a ticklish task: "Can you get down to the chemist? I've got crabs. Jane mustn't know. Tell the chemist it's for you." Obtained via The Beatles' local solicitor, the remedy was billed as sheep dip, £3, 15 shillings.
- With Yoko on the scene, John was eager to divorce Cynthia as soon as possible so Alex Mardas obligingly procured her adultery one night "with wine and candles". John gave him a black £6,000 Rivolta car for his trouble.
- The first time Maureen Starkey met her future husband Ringo was outside the Cavern sitting in his first car, a secondhand Ford Zodiac, licence plate NWM 466, which he drove without insurance or even a licence.
- Chez George with guests Allen Klein, Phil Spector and lawyer Martin Polden, Pattie Harrison suggested they play Happy Families. "Klein played as though it was the biggest deal he was ever in," Polden remembered. "He lost… and that was terrible."
- Apple Records president Ron Kass was poised to sign The Band but "was vetoed by John and Paul. The Beatles really had an ego. They just wanted to extend The Beatles… The four weren't interested in James Taylor."
- When Imelda Marcos withdrew police protection from The Beatles on the 1966 tour in Manila in retaliation for their inadvertent snub, Ringo and John sought refuge from the furious airport mob behind a group of nuns. "We thought because it's a Catholic country, if we hid behind the nuns, they won't get us."

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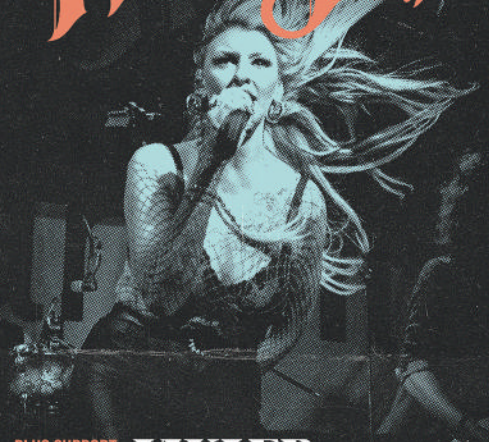

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Weighted Down: The Complicated Life Of Skip Spence

★★★★

Cam Cobb

OMNIBUS. £25

The West Coast's pop-art experimental man.

"Not everything is true," insists biographer Cobb as he seeks to dismantle some of the wild rumours that tend to dominate Spence's short, colourful career. A makeshift drummer in the early Jefferson Airplane, before becoming part of Moby Grape's guitar-toting frontline, Spence has been latterly feted for his lone, idiosyncratic, some say 'cracking up' 1969 solo album, *Oar*. Fellow Grape Bob Mosley finds it too painful to play. Bandmate Peter Lewis took 'Skippy' to the record store the day both *Oar* and Neil Young's second were due. "I realised that [Skip] made a masterpiece and Neil's was total jive," he claims. "But Neil got famous and Skippy went to the streets." Weighted Down doesn't scotch all those rumours, for there's much hair-raising stuff here. But it's vast and compassionate, offering a nuanced look at Spence's life against a panoramic backdrop of Americana. "He was inhabiting more than one universe at the same time," recalls Jorma Kaukonen, who visited Spence in prison weeks before *Oar* was recorded.

Mark Paytress

The Liverbirds

★★★★

Mary McGlory and Sylvia Saunders

FABER. £20

Heart-warming memoir from UK's first all-female rock'n'roll band, AKA 'the female Beatles'.

In late 1962, The Liverbirds, Mary McGlory, Pamela Birch, Sylvia Saunders and Valerie Gell, four working-class girls from Liverpool, played The Cavern. Earlier in the year, backstage after a Beatles show there, Lennon had told them, "Girls don't play guitars". But of course they proved him wrong, performing their own brand of tough R&B to a screaming crowd. McGlory and Saunders' excellent memoir (sadly Birch and Gell are no longer with us) is a glorious read, the pair (with MOJO's Lucy O'Brien) capturing the energy, excitement and colour of the early-'60s Liverpool scene and their Hamburg glory days. It's in Hamburg, at The Star-Club, where Chuck Berry offers to take them on a US tour – but only if they play topless in Las Vegas. They decline. It's not just rock'n'roll stories though – although The Kinks, the Stones etc all appear – but also a powerful articulation of female friendship, of looking after one another even after the final curtain call.

Lois Wilson

Sixteen Again: How Pete Shelley & Buzzcocks Changed Manchester Music (And Me)

★★★★

Paul Hanley

ROUTE. £25

Excellent oral history of Manchester's Premier Punk Band with focus on leader Pete Shelley.

Buzzcocks were always the most human and industrious of the first wave Britpunks: during 1978 they released two albums and five singles, and toured non-stop. A teenage Buzzcocks fan, Hanley takes the story through to the late-'80s reunions and beyond with interviews from all the major players and a sharp eye for punk historiography: his evaluation of sources is excellent, necessary in such a myth-encrusted topic. Hanley approvingly quotes Pete Shelley's description of punk: "an attitude which was born out of ideas". These ideas enabled Buzzcocks to surround themselves with talented artists and designers and conceptualists like Linder Sterling, Malcolm Garrett and Richard Boon – and in doing so to establish Manchester as a creative cultural environment for the non-privileged. Their unsung achievement was to subvert punk machismo with a softer masculinity: as Shelley states here, "your sexuality is a movable feast, isn't it? And so is gender."

Jon Savage

3 Shades Of Blue: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bill Evans And The Lost Empire Of Cool

★★★★★

James Kaplan

PENGUIN PRESS. £25

Three jazz giants and the LP that brought them together.

Here is a uniquely forensic telling of the genesis, creation and aftermath of the best-loved and most critically analysed jazz album of all time. James Kaplan takes three roads at once to Miles Davis's *Kind Of Blue*, pursuing the revolutionary, irascible trumpeter, obsessively spiritual saxophonist John Coltrane and the quietly incisive pianist Bill Evans through a turbulent mosaic of struggle, early achievement; and periodic conflict that peaks in their perfect, modal bond on two days in the spring of 1959. It's a feast of oft-told tales animated with renewing, vividly reported context especially as Kaplan details the horrific battles with heroin that nearly made Davis a has-been in his twenties, transformed Coltrane's musical search and ultimately consumed Evans. This won't be the last word on *Kind Of Blue*. It is one of the best.

David Fricke

Hot Time Blues: On The Trail Of Long-Gone Blues And Gospel Singers

★★★★

Alex van der Tuuk

AGRAM BLUES. £30

Paramount Records scholar van der Tuuk explores the blues research jungle.

Alex van der Tuuk belongs to a circle of music historians who use their skills with online tools to excavate the pasts of musicians known to us only from their records. This can be a contentious business, as can be seen in the long essay on singer-guitarist King Solomon Hill, previously thought to be one Joe Holmes using a pseudonym, but actually, van der Tuuk asserts, another man who really was called King Solomon Hill. Does this really matter? On AE Housman's principle that all knowledge is worthwhile, yes, of course; but knowing more, or guessing better, about figures like Hill can also enhance what we hear in their recordings (and Hill's are remarkable). Among other lives illuminated are those of Willie Brown, William Harris and several men and women of even deeper obscurity – until now.

Tony Russell

The Amplified Come As You Are: The Story Of Nirvana

★★★★

Michael Azerrad

HARPERONE, £30

Powerful expansion of the definitive 1993 biography of Nirvana's rise and crash.

Since his death in 1994, an industry of biographies and documentaries of varying authority have offered contrasting portraits of Kurt Cobain. But the most compelling and intimate has always been that presented by the first weighty Nirvana biog, penned with the band's cooperation and originally published in 1993 alongside the release of *In Utero* and months before Cobain's suicide. This "amplified" deluxe edition comes with 100,000 extra words of author's commentary, offering a wealth of further context, bitter hindsight and the occasional mea culpa from Azerrad where he realised he'd been hoodwinked by Cobain's impulse to dishonestly shape his narrative. These latterday interjections might affect the flow for first-time readers, but greatly enhance an already resonant text, delivering a more complex and nuanced telling of Nirvana's rise and crash, and a deeper, more sympathetic understanding of this story's tortured and problematic central character.

Stevie Chick

1999: The Year The Record Industry Lost Control

★★★★

Eamonn Forde

OMNIBUS. £30

A judicious account of how a complacent record business was blindsided by the shock of the new.

"In 1995," writes Eamonn Forde in his well-researched and persuasively argued book, "there were an estimated 23,500 websites in existence, up sharply from 2,738 the year before. By 1999, there were 3.17 million websites." He sees the latter year as the pivotal moment when the music industry sleepwalked into disaster, fat with excess profits from CDs, but unable to foresee the huge changes about to be wrought by the internet and the advent of unauthorised file sharing. Napster arrived in June that year, and all hell broke loose. Stadium acts and the corporate record companies could afford to lose sales and survive, but it largely robbed smaller bands and labels of the chance to earn any kind of a living wage from their work. Forde quotes a former EMI vice-president's reaction: "This is the entire world's music for free. We are fucked!" A timely survey of events whose consequences are still being felt.

Max Décharné

All ears: Moby Grape's Skip Spence was "inhabiting more than one universe at the same time."

Getty

Heavenly being: Lost Angel is an unapologetic love letter to the music of Judee Sill.

Broken wings

A tender, fun and sad documentary explores the wild life of an astonishing '70s talent. By Grayson Haver Currin.

Lost Angel: The Genius Of Judee Sill

★★★★

Dir. Andy Brown and Brian Lindstrom

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS. C/S

AT THE START of the 1970s, Los Angeles songwriter Judee Sill made two of that fertile scene's most affecting and poignant albums, her self-titled debut and *Heart Food* setting the vagaries of love and the mysteries of God to a baroque interpretation of folk rock. Sill, after all, was the first person David Geffen signed to Asylum. But her idiosyncratic considerations of the cosmos never turned mainstream, with modest sales compounded by her reluctance to play industry games or adulterate her vision. Impoverished and nearly anonymous, Sill overdosed in 1979 at the age of 35, her life a black box of questions for the generations that steadily discovered her music's power and charm over the next half-century. Were those stories about her early days – hard drugs, bank robberies, desperate measures – real? How did she become relegated to a historical footnote? And where did she go after she made *Heart Food*?

Lost Angel: The Genius Of Judee Sill is a massive and impassioned effort to pull the lid off that black box of Sill's life and address those vexing mysteries. Filmmakers Brian Lindstrom and Andy Brown led a wholesale excavation of what Sill left behind – from her diaries, letters and taped interviews, to the poignant memories of old friends – to retrace her life from a truly tumultuous childhood to its tragic end. Told largely by Sill in the first person, with deep archival video and stills augmented by animations meant to reflect her expansive and searching music, Lost Angel is a sympathetic, joyous, and regretful portrait of a singular talent hamstrung by her uncanny life.

It must have been tempting to sensationalise Sill's story, to dwell only on the stranger-than-fiction wildness of those days of hooking and heroin. Brown and Lindstrom don't shy from those subjects, but they contextualise them as the stuff that drove her to songwriting, the thing that might have saved her life. "Some of my greatest songs have come out of the worst times," Sill admits at one point. "But that's food for me, see? That's high octane!"

What's more, her songs are not mere window dressing here. They comprise the score, and they are taken seriously, with both Big Thief's Buck Meek and The Washington Post's Tim Page offering chord-by-chord analysis of why Sill's music works its wonders. They don't shy away from the sexism that surely plagued Sill's prospects, either, with Weyes Blood's Natalie Mering pointedly noting that she did not exude the beauty of her more famous female peers. Neither Sill's musical triumphs nor commercial failures were simple, and Lost Angel raises several questions that lack readymade answers.

Lindstrom and Brown worked on this film for so long that several of their sources – David Crosby, journalist Michele Kort, bassist Bill Plummer – have died since delivering their testimony. Lost Angel, then, does the important work of safeguarding vanishing stories. But it is also an unapologetic love letter to the music of Judee Sill, the sort of public embrace that often eluded her in life but arrives better now than never.

> "Lost Angel is a massive and impassioned effort to address the mysteries of Sill's life."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- When Sill was opening for David Crosby and Graham Nash, the latter gifted her an acoustic guitar which she kept. Big Thief's Buck Meek uses it here to finish a song salvaged from Sill's final notebooks.
- After being caught for a string of armed robberies, Sill was sent to a reform school. "I became church organist," she said. "And I learned all of my gospel licks there."
- Turtles precursor The Leaves recorded a woozy version of one of the first songs Sill ever wrote, Dead Time Bummer Blues. Two members went on to co-produce her debut.

Greenwich Entertainment (2)

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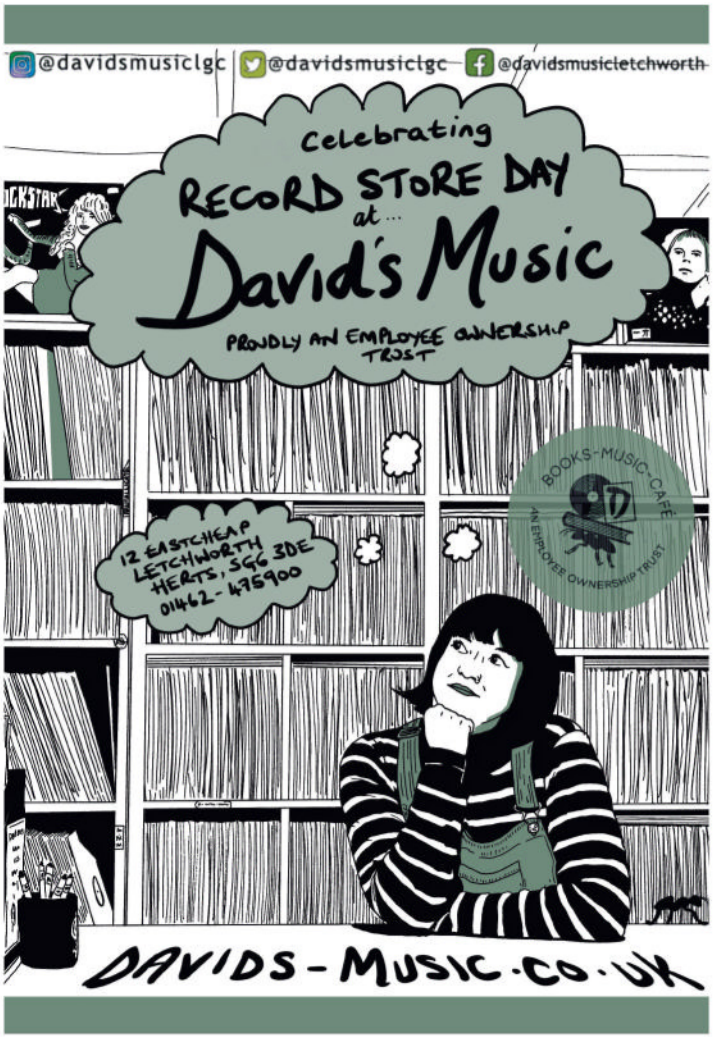

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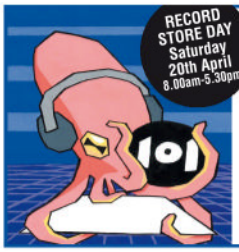

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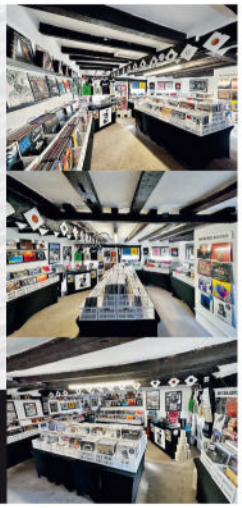

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Can's Damo Suzuki: spontaneous communicator of joy.

Brother Sky

Ex-Can singer and free 'metaphysical transporter' Damo Suzuki left us on February 9.

"IF BY ACCIDENT something happens, for me it's much better and more interesting than if I plan to do something," Damo Suzuki told MOJO in 2018. "Then," he added with a look of terrible boredom, "it's getting really like *work*."

He put this philosophy into practice like few others, staying true until the end to his ideals of spontaneous performance, and the wordless whisper/scream vocalising he once described as "the language of the Stone Age". This millennium, across the world, he went on stage with like-minded strangers without rehearsal and let whatever was possible manifest. Dubbed Damo Suzuki's Network, these ad hoc line-ups of 'Sound Carriers' ranged from trios to formations of over 50, and ages from 15 to over 80. Suzuki, a Liverpool FC fan who compared these performances to football games, admitted he did occasionally give guidance, but only with a minute to spare – all the better to jump in at the deep end. "With the music there is no winner and no loser," he told me. "But it is a sport – a mind-sport, with the result of making everybody happy."

> "The music is… a mind-sport, with the result of making everybody happy."
> DAMO SUZUKI

He was born Kenji Suzuki in Oiso, Kanagawa prefecture in Japan on January 16, 1950. Raised by his indefatigable mother Kimie after his architect father died when he was five, the young Suzuki was a devotee of soul and The Kinks. In search of adventure, he left Japan aged 18 and headed to Sweden and Ireland. In April 1970 he was in Munich appearing in the same production of Hair as Donna Summer when he was spotted "making a happening" on the street by bassist Holger Czukay and drummer Jaki Liebezeit of Can. Can had recently lost vocalist Malcolm Mooney and were paralysed: sensing a perfect fit, Czukay invited Suzuki to join them for a gig that night.

His arrival ushered in a golden time of creative fulfilment for Can, whose albums were comprised of edited, hypnagogic improvisations. 1970's *Soundtracks* featured defining Suzuki moment Mother Sky, with classics *Tago Mago* (1971), *Ege Bamyasi* (1972) and *Future Days* (1973) following. There was even a West German chart hit with TV crime theme Spoon in 1972. Yet, uncomfortable with pop stardom and now a Jehovah's Witness, Suzuki left after an August '73 gig in Edinburgh and returned to normal working and family life.

After facing cancer aged 33, he came back to music, in time for The Fall's berserk 1985 tribute I Am Damo Suzuki. After fronting The Damo Suzuki Band and Dunkelziffer, from 2003 he was settled into his never-ending tour, improvising gigs with local musicians. Being diagnosed with cancer again, in 2014, did not stop him. When MOJO met him in Cologne in 2018, he spoke frankly about being on morphine, and how being on-stage made him feel "free… better than normal." That year he published his freewheeling memoir and treatise I Am Damo Suzuki with Paul Woods, appeared at a tribute gig for Jaki Liebezeit in Cologne and played with the final line-up of The Fall in Manchester. He continued to play live his way until 2020, and received an inspiring documentary portrait in Michelle Heighway's 2022 film Energy.

His good humour, thoughtfulness and will to live made a permanent impression, and it is hard to believe such a spirit can be gone from the world. Damo told us that what he sang had no literal meaning, but that "I take much more of an emotional thing from that spontaneous feeling, the feeling you cannot programme." He added, "maybe I'm communicating the endless wide possibility of joy to come."

Ian Harrison

Joe Dilworth

THE LEGACY

The Album: Can *Future Days* (Spoon, 1973)
The Sound: All Suzuki's LPs with Can are essential. But after primordial rite *Tago Mago* and the bubbling funk *Ege Bamyasi*, his hypnotic sign-off *Future Days* reached a peak of immaculate ambience that levitates in the heat-haze as the five-piece group achieve their closest and most seamless unity. Turn it on, and remember him.

Aston 'Family Man' Barrett

Wailer, reggae bass giant

BORN 1946

AS BOB Marley's bassist and band leader in The Wailers throughout the 1970s, Aston Francis Barrett was the man who led the pack and introduced the world to the joys of reggae's over-amplified bass culture.

He was born and raised initially on Beeston Street in downtown Kingston, in the thick of Jamaica's incipient music business, and after building his own bass guitar, he and his younger brother Carlton became a dynamite rhythm section for hire, moonlighting as welders to get by. In gigging combo The Hippy Boys, they played on 1969 organ instrumental The Liquidator and were rechristened the Harry J All-Stars. After that was a UK hit, they toured Britain under another alias, The Upsetters. In an ensuing capacity as fledgling producer Lee 'Scratch' Perry's core studio band alongside guitarist Alva Lewis, they backed the Wailers vocal trio on their ground-breaking recordings with Perry circa 1970-71, which birthed roots reggae's collision of Rasta ideology and sultry Caribbean funk.

As The Wailers signed with Chris Blackwell's Island and went 'outernational', 'Fams' and brother 'Carly' underpinned Marley's vision throughout, their spacious rhythms playing a huge role in reggae's global crossover. Even though Marley's original vocal cohorts Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston quit in '73, Barrett would appear on their respective solo masterpieces, *Legalize It* and *Blackheart Man*, as well as numerous classics as part of Bunny Lee's house band, The Aggrovators, and with other JA giants including Burning Spear, Yabby You, Keith Hudson and Augustus Pablo.

Along the way, 'Fams' also mentored bass titan Robbie Shakespeare and inspired countless others, such as Jah Wobble. After Marley's death in '81 and Carlton's murder in '87, Aston helped carry the torch with The Wailers Band on and off, until a series of strokes at home in Miami silenced his low-end thunder, and sadly finally claimed him, aged 77, on February 3.

Andrew Perry

Aston 'Family Man' Barrett: Number 1 reggae bassist.

Tim Barrow/urbanimage.tv, Stephen J. Cohen/Getty, Getty, Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy, Alamy

Dexter Romweber

Flat Duo Jets honcho

BORN 1966

DEXTER Romweber formed his first group when he was 10, drafting in his sister Sara to play pots and pans. This bracing back-to-basics aesthetic remained a constant throughout his years fronting rockabilly two-piece Flat Duo Jets. Formed in North Carolina and named after Gene Vincent's guitar, the "power duo" enjoyed an early showcase in documentary Athens, GA: Inside/Out, alongside R.E.M., The B-52's and Pylon, while their eponymous debut, recorded in a garage, won them the support of The Cramps and David Letterman. Fleetingly signed to Geffen in the late '90s, Flat Duo Jets never tasted mainstream success, splitting in 1999. But their chaotic energy and earthy songcraft were influential on many, including Jack White, who released a 7-inch of Romweber playing alongside his sister Sara in 2009 and remarked, "You have no idea how long I've waited to hear that guitar tone in my studio."

Stevie Chick

"Scene-stealer" Tich, AKA Ian Amey (second right, standing) in Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich, 1966.

Tich

Dave Dee's blond foil, ace guitarist

BORN 1944

IF 1965 had Brian Jones and 1967 Monkee Peter Tork, 1966's leading hitmakers Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich had their own blond scene-stealer. But beyond the group's zany facade, Tich – born Ian Amey in the Dozeys' hometown of Salisbury – elevated that year's cheerful run of successes with guitar stylings that wouldn't be out of place on Beck-era Yardbirds material. His trademark fuzz sound would erupt during a song's 'rave-up' section, never more roaringly than on Hold Tight!. He also brought various textures to the group's work – electric mandolin on Bend It!, flamenco lines on The Legend Of Xanadu. Tich went further still on 1967's goth-psych flipside The Sun Goes Down, his electronically enhanced notes nudging the song into 'freakbeat' cult status. After Dave Dee's departure in 1969, Tich helped keep the group together, though by the mid '70s, DDDBM&T had become a nostalgia act. Tich's favourite colour was red.

Mark Paytress

"Steve Wright unwittingly sparked The Smiths' 1986 hit Panic."

Steve Wright

UK radio fixture

BORN 1954

BORN IN Greenwich, Steve Wright worked in the BBC record library opposite Broadcasting House before beginning his DJ career in Reading in 1976. He joined Radio 1 in 1980 and debuted his long-running Steve Wright In The Afternoon show a year later. Adopting the zany, character-led US 'zoo format', it ran for 12 years. Purged from Radio 1, in 1996 he joined Radio 2, where his afternoon show was resurrected (when it was axed in 2022 he signed off with Queen's Radio Gaga) and his Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs ran until his death. He also regularly presented Top Of The Pops and voiced archival re-rub Top Of The Pops 2, and released numerous singles, with 1991 novelty I'll Be Back by Arnee And The Terminators reaching Number 5. He also unwittingly sparked The Smiths' 1986 hit Panic, when he played I'm Your Man by Wham! after news broke of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. For a time Morrissey could be seen wearing a T-shirt of Wright's face and the slogan Hang The DJ: Wright bought one himself.

Ian Harrison

Combat rocker: Mojo Nixon poked a sharp stick at mainstream culture.

Mojo Nixon

Rockabilly provocateur, outlaw DJ

BORN 1957

WITH SONGS such as Donald Trump Can Suck My Dick, and a tendency to encourage crowds to chant things like "Let's castrate Michael Bolton", Mojo Nixon was never destined for a career in the Diplomatic Service.

Born Neill Kirby McMillan Jr. in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he grew up nearby in Danville, Virginia, where his father owned radio station WILA. After leaving college, Nixon briefly moved to England in 1979, determined to join The Clash. "I wanted to be Joe Strummer," he recalled, but "eventually I had to be me." Back home in 1980 he formed short-lived Denver punk band Zebra 123, then adopted the name Mojo Nixon – a combination of "voodoo and bad politics." His aim thereafter was "to go too far, too fast," repeatedly poking at an ever-more-conformist mainstream culture with a sharp stick.

Teaming up with percussionist Skid Roper, by 1986 Nixon was causing a stir with rockabilly-inflected songs like Elvis Is Everywhere and Stuffin' Martha's Muffin – a calculated jibe at MTV which somehow led the station to hire him to record promo shorts for them, exposing his particular brand of libertarian anarchism to millions. That unlikely relationship eventually disintegrated after they refused to air the video for his song Debbie Gibson Is Pregnant With My Two-Headed Lovechild, but sometimes his targets played along, such as when the Eagles drummer himself climbed on-stage at a Nixon gig to help sing Don Henley Must Die.

Mojo appeared in various films, from Great Balls Of Fire (1989) to Buttcrack (1998), then became the subject of a biographical documentary, The Mojo Manifesto (2022). Carving out a parallel career as a country radio DJ, he also hosted a talk show about politicians, named with characteristic subtlety, Lying Cocksuckers. He died of cardiac arrest on board the annual Outlaw Country Cruise, a day after his final performance.

Max Décharné

Bobby Tench

Rock'n'soul all-rounder

BORN 1944

A CAPABLE guitarist with a fine blues and soul voice, London-born Bobby Tench first played the capital's clubs with soul-rockers The Gass, who were the house band for Jack Good's musical Catch My Soul in 1969, and whose 1970 LP *Juju* featured Peter Green. An early member of funk band Gonzalez, Tench left to sing with The Jeff Beck Group in 1971, the same year he recorded alongside Fela Kuti on Ginger Baker's *Stratavarious* LP. In the ensuing decades Tench played with a remarkable array of talent, including Freddie King, Linda Lewis, Van Morrison and Eric Burdon; he also joined Widowmaker, Boxer and post-Family act Streetwalkers, and led his own band Hummingbird. Other badges of rock'n'roll honour included joining Humble Pie, playing on Topper Headon's solo LP *Waking Up* and fronting The Thin Lizzy Band. In recent years, he played with Alan Price.

Ian Harrison

> "I wanted to be Joe Strummer… I had to be me."
> MOJO NIXON

John 'Duff' Lowe

Quarrymen pianist

BORN 1942

BORN IN West Derby, Liverpool, John Lowe was 15 when his grammar school friend Paul McCartney suggested he play piano with his skiffle group The Quarrymen. And so, in July 1958, he was present when future Beatles John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison – plus drummer Colin Hanton – made their studio debut, recording a cover of Buddy Holly's That'll Be The Day and McCartney/Harrison original In Spite Of All The Danger, at Percy Phillips' home studio in Kensington. After leaving The Quarrymen in 1960, Lowe played with Ricky Tomlinson – AKA TV's Jim Royle – in Hobo Rick & The City Slickers. Possessor of The Quarrymen's sole acetate, he sold it to McCartney in 1981, who released it on The Beatles' *Anthology 1* in 1994. The same year Lowe rejoined guitarist Rod Davis in a new formation of The Quarrymen, and played with the group until 2017.

Ian Harrison

Henry Fambrough

Spinners voice

BORN 1938

HENRY FAMBROUGH was the smooth baritone whose harmonies helped define The Spinners' hits including I'll Be Around, Could It Be I'm Falling In Love and Ghetto Child, the latter featuring his co-lead vocals. From the Detroit suburb of Ferndale, Fambrough started out in doo woppers The Domingoes, who hit the US Top 30 as The Spinners with That's What Girls Are Made For in 1961. Later acquired by Motown, Fambrough worked as Berry Gordy's mother's chauffeur in between hits I'll Always Love You (1965) and 1970's Stevie Wonder-produced It's A Shame. Signed to Atlantic on Aretha Franklin's suggestion, the group struck gold with Thom Bell-produced 45s including Then Came You, their 1974 US Number 1 with Dionne Warwick. They hit Number 1 in Britain, meanwhile, with 1980's Working My Way Back To You. Fambrough, their last original member, sang on 2021's *'Round The Block And Back Again* before retiring last year.

Lois Wilson

Working man: The Spinners' Henry Fambrough.

Getty (3), Alamy

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Straight talker: Nashville cowboy Toby Keith.

Nicky Graham

Ziggy affiliate, songwriter

BORN 1945

NICKY GRAHAM's career got underway supporting The Rolling Stones in 1965 with The End and concluded with a 10-year stint as Director of PRS For Music. Between times, he played with Tucky Buzzard, A&R'd at Polydor and later at CBS, where he worked closely with The Nolans, David Essex and Bonnie Tyler. For several months in 1972, he was close to the Bowie camp, booking gigs for Tony Defries while playing piano for much of the first British tour and two BBC radio sessions. He's there in the Starman TOTP appearance and (rear view only) in Mick Rock's infamous 'fellatio' photo taken at Oxford Town Hall. No less significant was The End's 1968 single, Shades Of Orange, a masterful slice of Brit-psych produced by Bill Wyman during the *Satanic Majesties* sessions. Graham's gift as a hit songwriter flourished in the '80s, notably with co-write When Will I Be Famous by Bros.

Mark Paytress

Toby Keith

Country's Mr Big

BORN 1961

LARGER THAN life, hyper-patriotic and one of country's highest-earning stars of all time, Oklahoman Toby Keith Covel divided Nashville and beyond like few others. Along with the straight-talking came controversy, including his 2002 spat with Dixie Chicks' Natalie Maines (after she criticised Keith's post-9/11 single Courtesy Of The Red, White & Blue, he used a doctored photo of Maines with Saddam Hussein as a live backdrop). A former oil field worker and semi-pro footballer, Keith was 31 when his debut single I Should've Been A Cowboy topped the US Country chart in 1993, and as his politics gradually moved from "conservative Democrat" to playing Donald Trump's inauguration, he topped the country chart at least once for 20 consecutive years. He was also co-founder of charity Ally's House and The Toby Keith Foundation, both focusing on paediatric cancer. He died after a two-year battle against stomach cancer.

Andy Fyfe

THEY ALSO SERVED

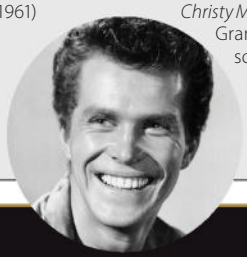
REGGAE SINGER **PEETAH MORGAN** (below, b.1977) formed family group **Morgan Heritage** – their dad was solo artist and Black Eagles member Denroy Morgan – in Massachusetts. They released their debut LP *Miracles* in 1994, and, after a move to Jamaica, explored Rasta themes on later LPs, with *Strictly Roots* winning a Grammy in 2016. The group's last album was *The Homeland* in 2023.

BASSIST **BRIAN TURRINGTON** (b.1950) was playing in pub rockers **The Winkies** when they were recruited by **Brian Eno** to be his backing group for a Peel session and his truncated *Here Come The Warm Jets* tour in 1974. Turrington continued to record with Eno, appearing on *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*, *Another Green World* and *Before And After Science*, and also played with **John Cale**, **Robert Calvert**, **Phil Manzanera**, **The Tyla Gang** and **The Count Bishops**.

ENGINEER **CORKY STASIAK** (b.1948) worked at New York's Record Plant, and lent his expertise to albums including **Bruce Springsteen**'s *Born To Run*, *Frampton Comes Alive!*, **The Clash**'s *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, **Aerosmith**'s *Toys In The Attic*, **Lou Reed**'s *Legendary Hearts*, **Alice Cooper**'s *Welcome To My Nightmare* and **Kiss**'s *Destroyer*. He also worked with **Jim Croce**, **John Lennon**, the **Raspberries** and others.

DRUMMER **JIMMY VAN EATON** (b.1937) was recording his group **The Echoes** at Sun studios in Memphis when engineer Cowboy Jack Clement heard his rock'n'roll beat. Clement recommended him to **Billy Lee Riley**, and in 1956 Van Eaton became Sun's in-house drummer, playing on **Jerry Lee Lewis**'s Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On and **Riley**'s Red Hot, as well as with **Roy Orbison**, **Johnny Cash**, **Charlie Rich**, **Charlie Feathers** and more. He later led a gospel ensemble, but returned to rock'n'roll, advising on 1989 Jerry Lee biopic Great Balls Of Fire, in which Mojo Nixon played the drummer on-screen. He also played with fellow Sun old boys, and released his 1998 solo LP *The Beat Goes On*.

DRUMMER **MICHAEL SALMON** (b. 1961) was a founder member of Durham's **Prefab Sprout** in the mid '70s. In 1983 he appeared on their debut single Lions In My Own Garden (Exit Someone), while unofficial recordings find him playing on early versions of such later Sprout classics as Faron Young and Bonny. He later played his own songs with **Swimmer Leon**. He was among Sprout mainman Paddy McAloon's dedicatees on 2009's *Let's Change The World With Music* album.



COMPOSER **STEVE BROWN** (b.1958) produced Top 10 albums for **Rumer** and **Laura Mvula** in the 2010s, and will also be remembered for more comedic endeavours. His credits include music for satirical '80s puppet show Spitting Image, BBC impersonator showcase Dead Ringers and Harry Hill's TV programmes; his other claim to immortality was playing Glen Ponder, bandleader to Steve Coogan creation Alan Partridge. He wrote for stage musicals and children's TV.

BANDLEADER **RANDY SPARKS** (below, b.1933) founded shifting-membership folk group **The New Christy Minstrels** in 1961. Scoring US Top 20 hits including Green, Green (1963) and Today (1964), their 1962 debut *Presenting The New Christy Minstrels* won a Grammy. Sparks sold his interest in the group in 1964, but regained control in the '90s. He also worked with **Burl Ives** and ran the 'farm' group **Back Porch Majority**: those who passed through his groups included **Kenny Rogers**, **Gene Clark** and **John Denver**.

LOUISIANA singer, songwriter and accordion player **JO-EL SONNIER** (b.1946) found success on the '80s country charts with songs including No More One More Time. He was also a sought-after session musician, playing harmonica on recordings by **Johnny Cash** and **Hank Williams Jr**, accordion on **Elvis Costello**'s 1986 song American Without Tears, and **Dolly Parton**'s chart-topping 1989 single, Why'd You Come Here Lookin' Like That. In 2015, his music was recognised with a Grammy.

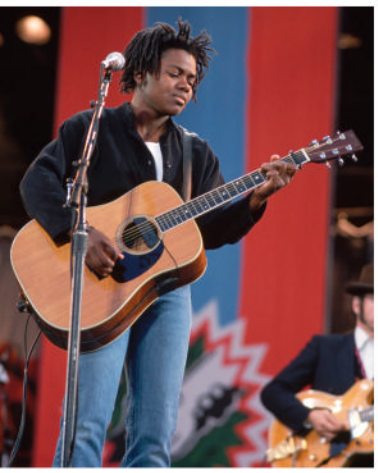
LYRICIST **TONI STERN** (right, b.1944) met **Carole King** after King's split with husband and collaborator Gerry Goffin. The two began to write together, their most celebrated works being US Number 1 and break-up song par excellence It's Too Late, and Where You Lead – later theme for US TV show Gilmore Girls. Both appeared on King's huge-selling 1971 classic *Tapestry*. Stern's songs were also recorded by **The Monkees**, **Carpenters**, **Kenny Rogers**, **Johnny Mathis** and **Barbra Streisand**. She later turned her attentions to poetry.

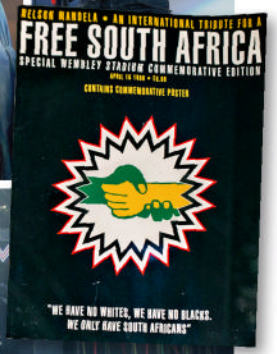
DRUMMER **FRANK DEVITO** (b.1930) initially played jazz in New York, and spent three years with **Sinatra** in the late '50s. The following decade he moved into session work with **The Wrecking Crew**, playing with **Sam Cooke**, **Ricky Nelson**, **Dick Dale**, **Sonny & Cher**, the **Baja Marimba Band** and **The Beach Boys** (he recalled being paid $57 for Surfin' USA). He also played bongos for his studio client **Elvis** on the '68 Comeback TV special.

SINGER and music executive **DAVID LIBERT** (b.1943) had Top 5 US hits in '66 and '67 with See You In September and I Got Rhythm, with sunshine popsters **The Happenings**. In the early-to-mid '70s he was tour manager for **Alice Cooper** (he's credited for backing vocals on 1973's *Billion Dollar Babies*) and later moved into management, handling the affairs of **George Clinton** and groups, **Sheila E**, **Living Colour** and many more. He also did jail time for Sunset Strip drug dealing, and later worked for animal welfare.

Chris Catchpole and Ian Harrison

Getty (4), courtesy Demon Records





Unity rockers: (clockwise from left) Neil Young; Winnie Mandela (standing, fourth right) meets performers and Jerry Dammers (third from right); Lou Reed; Wembley stage and crowd; the star of the show, Nelson Mandela; Tracy Chapman; Jim Kerr with Peter Gabriel and Little Steven; (below) Terence Trent D'Arby.

APRIL 1990
...Wembley salutes Mandela's freedom

APRIL 16 Nelson Mandela was free. He'd been released from Cape Town's Victor Verster Prison on February 11, after 27 years as a political prisoner. Two months later, today at Wembley Stadium, the veteran freedom campaigner's years of principled struggle would be celebrated at the star-packed event titled Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute For A Free South Africa. It would also be his first high-profile public appearance in Britain.

His embrace by the world of popular music had begun exactly six years before, when The Special AKA were in the UK Top 10 with Jerry Dammers' song Nelson Mandela. Some of those diverted by its upbeat tune and township jive beat were surprised to learn what it was actually about. Imprisoned since 1963, Mandela was the most high-profile member of the African National Congress, the resistance to South Africa's white minority apartheid regime that kept its black citizens dispossessed and disenfranchised. Dammers also founded Artists Against Apartheid, putting on consciousness-raising events played by The Smiths, New Order, The Pogues and others, the largest of which was the free Freedom Beat on Clapham Common in June 1986. On that day Hugh Masekela, The Style Council, Elvis Costello, Sade and more had played to raise awareness and call for sanctions.

There was movement in the US too. In 1985 the album and single Sun City was released by the collective named Artists United Against Apartheid. Organised by E Street Band guitarist Little Steven Van Zandt, a wildly diverse group of musicians including Bob Dylan, Miles Davis and Run-DMC protested against rockers making money playing the South African holiday resort in the puppet state of Bophuthatswana.

In July 1988, Mandela's 70th birthday was celebrated with a gig at Wembley Stadium, when a global audience estimated to number 500 million watched on TV. Simple Minds, Dire Straits, George Michael, Al Green, the Bee Gees and Sting all performed, calling for apartheid to be dismantled and free elections held, though in the US Fox TV removed political utterances from its six-hour edit. In the New York Times, Little Steven wrote that "the show was neutered".

And, Mandela was still in jail. Eighteen months later, though, his lawyer contacted British producer Tony Hollingsworth, who'd also made the '88 show happen. Understanding that Mandela's release was imminent, another Wembley event was needed. Word went out to the music world – Peter Gabriel immediately agreed to play – though there were, inevitably, problems. In February, Mandela decided he didn't want to make his symbolic first appearance in the country of Margaret Thatcher, who had opposed the isolation of South Africa. This led to respected activist Archbishop Trevor Huddleston threatening to resign as president of the UK's Anti-Apartheid Movement. Mandela reconsidered.

On April 16, musicians from South Africa, the UK and US played to celebrate Mandela's freedom: Simple Minds reprised their anthemic Mandela Day; Lou Reed played The Last Great American Whale and Dirty Blvd; Tracy Chapman sang Freedom Now and Talkin 'Bout A Revolution, and duetted with Peter Gabriel on Don't Give Up; Gabriel sang Biko, his tribute to the murdered political activist, with Ugandan singer Geoffrey

Getty Images (10), Shutterstock, Alamy (2)

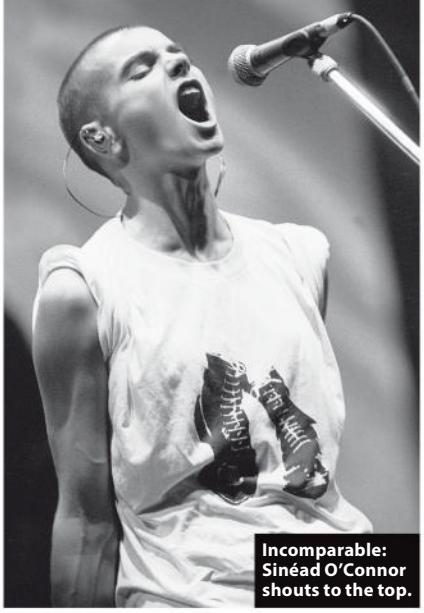
Oryema; Neil Young delivered a loaded Rockin' In The Free World, and Jerry Dammers performed Nelson Mandela with The Manhattan Brothers. "Nelson Mandela is out of prison now so this song is part of history," he said, noting that Mandela did not have the right to vote in South Africa yet – nor did any of the musicians on-stage.

With Special Branch officers on hand to guard against assassination attempts, the time for Mandela's speech was kept secret. When he came on-stage, he was received with an eight-minute ovation from the 74,000-strong crowd, who sang You'll Never Walk Alone. Having made clear that he did not expect his speech to be edited, he was on-stage for three quarters of an hour, declaring "it will be a proud day… when we are all able to say that the apartheid crime against humanity is no more."

Interviewed by the BBC that day, performer Terence Trent D'Arby spoke of awe at meeting Mandela. "It was like meeting a king… I'm chuffed to bits."

Apartheid was officially abolished in 1991, and Mandela was elected President of South Africa in 1994. A 90th Birthday Tribute was held at Wembley in 2008, where The Special AKA's Nelson Mandela again took pride of place, this time with Amy Winehouse, Queen, Dammers and others on-stage. Mandela died, a globally respected figure, aged 95 in 2013. "A lot of politicians are going to pay tribute to him," said Dammers, "but if they actually listened to what he said, about freeing people from the prison of poverty, and acted on it – that would be the best tribute of all."

Ian Harrison



Incomparable: Sinéad O'Connor shouts to the top.

Sinéad at US Number 1

APRIL 21 **Sinéad O'Connor is at Number 1 in the US with her cover of Prince's Nothing Compares 2 U, which topped the UK charts in January. Its parent album *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* also reaches Number 1 in Britain and America. After playing British dates throughout the month, she plays sold out Hammersmith Odeon shows on April 24 and 25. She's recently told Q that she regrets her outspoken critiques of U2 and her previous endorsement of the IRA, and that she was "acting" when crying tears on her hit single's video. "Acting isn't pretending," she said. "It's using your past experiences, summoning them up to tell a story that's not a lie but the truth."**

Know your enemy: Chuck D and Flavor Flav bring the noise to the cosmos.

P.E. LAND ON THE BLACK PLANET

APRIL 22 Public Enemy's thunderous third album *Fear Of A Black Planet* enters the UK charts at 4, though lead single 911 Is A Joke halts at Number 41 on April 15. The album later reaches Number 19 in the US. "We developed a brand new music," Chuck D tells Dutch TV this month. "It's called PE-Funk. It's P-Funk with a little bit of the Enemy in it." Big Daddy Kane and ex-N.W.A. rapper Ice Cube guest on LP track Burn Hollywood Burn; out next month, Ice Cube's solo debut *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* is co-produced by Public Enemy production team The Bomb Squad. This month PE play European tour dates with support from 3rd Bass, and later do gigs in the US.

ALSO ON!

SAW SOAR

2 Pop production sweatshop Stock Aitken Waterman win Songwriters Of The Year for the third time in a row at the Ivor Novello awards at Mayfair's Grosvenor House. Popsters Bros hand over the award. "It makes you stop and think," says SAW's Pete Waterman (above). "My heroes Lennon and McCartney only won it twice."

FAREWELL, SASSY

3 Jazz vocal great Sarah Vaughan dies aged 66. Dubbed 'The Divine One', her old friend Billy Eckstine is among the mourners at her funeral service in Newark.

FARM AID IN THE USA

7 Indianapolis's Hoosier Dome hosts benefit show Farm Aid IV. Performers include Neil Young and CSNY, Iggy Pop, Carl Perkins, Guns N' Roses and Elton John, who dedicates Candle In The Wind to 18-year-old Aids patient Ryan White, who dies the next day.

ROSES NICKED

12 At Wolverhampton Crown Court, The Stone Roses are fined £3,000 each for vandalism with paint at their old label FM Revolver, who reissued their 1987 single Sally Cinnamon with an unworthy video in January. The same day in South Carolina, James Brown is released from prison to begin a work programme, after jail time for a PCP-fuelled interstate car chase in 1988.

TOP TEN

UK TWELVE-INCH SINGLES APRIL 14

1 **THE POWER** SNAP ARISTA

2 **VOGUE** MADONNA SIRE

3 **STEP ON** HAPPY MONDAYS FACTORY

4 **GHETTO HEAVEN** THE FAMILY STAND ATLANTIC

5 **DON'T MISS THE PARTYLINE** BIZZ NIZZ COOLTEMPO

6 **STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER** CANDY FLIP DEBUT EDGE

7 **MAMMA GAVE BIRTH TO THE SOUL CHILDREN** QUEEN LATIFAH + DE LA SOUL GEE STREET

8 **KINGSTON TOWN** UB40 VIRGIN/DEP INTERNATIONAL

9 **BLACK VELVET** ALANNAH MYLES ATLANTIC

10 **THIS BEAT IS TECHNOTRONIC** TECHNOTRONIC SWANYARD

Fab gear: on a field trip with Candyflip.

AD ARCHIVE 1990

A bottle of vodka the size of Central Park? What have I been drinking? Just one of Absolut's 1,500-plus themed adverts.

Top of the swaps: (clockwise from left) Radio 1 DJ John Peel mimed on TOTP in 1971; a selection of *Bringing It All Back Home* homage LP sleeves; close shave: Peter Hammill's half-beard on 1978's *The Future Now* cover; star and stripes: Marillion's Fish and co performed a secret gig as Lufthansa Air Terminal at the Marquee in 1983.

Who swapped instruments on live TV?

Let us bring clarity to your rock doubts and answer your musical questions.

I saw a 1995 Top Of The Pops performance of Oasis playing their hit Roll With It, when Liam Gallagher pretended to play the guitar and Noel sang. What are the other good examples of groups changing their line-ups to freak out TV viewers?

Andrew Pell, via e-mail

MOJO says: The does-not-compute factor has always been a rewarding phenomenon watching bands on TV. There are lots of good examples from Top Of The Pops: how can we forget John Peel miming Ray Jackson of Lindisfarne's mandolin part when Rod Stewart played Maggie May in 1971? Other instances include a roadie standing in for Can guitarist Michael Karoli when they played 1976 hit I Want More; The Specials and The Beat switching bassists when they both appeared on a 1980 episode, and all of Squeeze swapping instruments when they did Up The Junction in 1979, with Glenn Tilbrook as singing drummer (The Stranglers did the same when they did No More Heroes on Dutch TV show TopPop in 1977, with Dave Greenfield starring as vocalist/bassist and Jet Black on guitar). And it may be a video, but a particular MOJO favourite is the clip for Status Quo's Rockin' All Over The World, when absent-in-Australia bassist Alan Lancaster was replaced by a strange life-sized puppet resembling Peter 'Where Did You Go To My Lovely' Sarstedt. Of course, we need to know your choices, please!

LOOKALIKE SLEEVES REVISITED

MOJO says: Album cover homages (Ask MOJO 364) provoked a flurry of interest. Hanns Peter Bushoff of Munich sent us a load of *Bringing It All Back Home* lookalikes (see above) by Ray D'Ariano, Jack & Amanda Palmer, King Blank, Greg 'Stackhouse' Prevost and others. Max Clemen threw in how the Fun Lovin' Criminals' King Of New York copied The Jimi Hendrix Experience's *Electric Ladyland*, and Kruder & Dorfmeister's *G-Stoned* mimicked Simon & Garfunkel's *Bookends*; other doppelgängers include Nick Drake's *Bryter Layter* and Boris's *Akuma No Uta*, the remix 12-inch of Depeche Mode's New Life and Black Sabbath's *Born Again*, and Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* and Camp Lo's *Uptown Saturday Night*. Do Lou Reed's *Transformer* and *The Blue Mask* (the same portrait of Lou is used) and Bowie's *"Heroes"* and the re-designed *The Next Day* count? Let the debate commence.

Getty (2)

MARILLION COMEDY CONNECTION PT.2

Re: Ask MOJO 354 and 358's discussions of who wrote the music for '80s BBC 'alternative comedy' show Not The Nine O'Clock News, and how Neil from The Young Ones supported Marillion. I should add that on October 30, 1983 Marillion played a secret gig at the Marquee as Lufthansa Air Terminal – a reference to NOT spoof Nice Video Shame About The Song by Visage-like New Romantic group Lufthansa Terminal.

Graham Steventon, via e-mail

MOJO says: Thanks Graham! Back then there were lots of secret gigs at the Marquee, with The Jam re-named John's Boys in 1979, Genesis appearing as Garden Wall in '82, and Mötley Crüe playing as The Four Skins in 1991, which may have perplexed anyone hoping to see the Oi! band of nearly the same name.

OLD BEARD ALBION

After Peter Hammill's appearance in MOJO 364, I am moved to ask: after he was photographed with a half-shaved beard on *The Future Now* LP sleeve, how long did he keep it?

Phil Griffiths, via e-mail

MOJO says: Hammill says he shaved half his beard after a Van der Graaf Generator show at Eric's in Liverpool on May 16, 1978. "[Violinist Graham Smith] thought I'd genuinely and finally cracked," wrote Hammill. He was photographed for *The Future Now* the following day by the late Brian Griffin, who said in 2017 book POP, "Peter came to my flat in Chiswick with his half-shaven beard. He had travelled there on the District Line. I photographed him in my bedroom above the radiator… afterwards he left for the Tube the same way, half-bearded." Hammill played a show thusly at Bangor University later that same day, but later confirmed, "the rest of the beard went a couple of days later."

HELP MOJO

I've been reading some old newspaper articles about Scott Walker. In a couple from 1967/68, there is mention of a Ralph Garnett, AKA "Big Louey", variously described as Walker's assistant or minder and "generally spoken of as one of the best road managers in the business". Who was "Big Louey"? And do we know if he was the influence for the song Big Louise from *Scott 3* (1969), which Walker claimed was "about an aging transvestite"?

Rob Webb, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Phazer To Stun

Win! A Phazer MK II effects pedal from Hylight Electronics.

ORIGINALLY FOUNDED by British audio engineer David Reeves, Hylight Electronics built high quality, famously sturdy amps that helped shape rock in Britain in the 1960s, 1970s and after. Now back in business, the firm continues to offer guitarists the best in amps and effects units. Which brings us on to this month's prize: made in partnership with Gary Hurst, designer of the 1965 Tone Bender, the Phazer MK II is a re-designed reproduction of his mighty 1970s phaser.

Encased in a zinc-plated Dark Blue powder-finished body, its Reactance and Lo/Hi Speed controls are your passport to classic phaser effects.

The winner bags a Hylight Phazer MK II worth £349, made and signed by Gary Hurst himself! How to enter: take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of a musician. Visit www.mojo4music.com/crossword and fill out the form, along with your answer, in the provided field. Entry is free and closes at midnight on **May 2, 2024**. Winners are selected at random. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com.

For more info visit: hylight.co.uk

ANSWERS

MOJO 364

Across: 1 Joey Ramone, 5 Orbital, 10 I'm Down, 11 Crystal Ship, 13 Centrefold, 15 Gamblin' Man, 16 Hungry Men, 18 Ten, 19 Eclipse, 21 Rap, 23 Ulster, 24 Asia, 25 Ostend, 28 I.S.B, 29 PWL, 31 Live In Rio, 35 Fever, 36 Orangutang, 37 She, 38 UR, 39 Na, 40 Emerald, 42 Lefty, 43 Escalade, 45 Siberia, 49 Chic, 51 Index, 52 Guy Clark, 53 Heino, 54 Acid, 55 Elegant Chaos, 56 Khan, 57 Hush, 58 Oscar.

Down: 1 Join Together, 2 Eddie Myer, 3 Raw Power, 4 No Regrets, 6 Really Cool, 7 Insane In The Brain, 8 Animals, 9 Use Me, 12 Ode, 14 Equal Rights, 17 National, 20 End, 22 Gap, 24 About Face, 26 Needle, 27 Orr, 30 We Get By, 32 Norma Tanega, 33 Ian, 34 Lazy Sunday, 41 Paycheck, 43 Egg, 44 Eckman, 46 Riviera, 47 Adi, 48 Axe, 50 I Hate U, 54 As Is.

Anagram: Shane O'Hooligan

Winners: Eamonn McClorey and **Owen Woodward** each win a set of AM Pro X10 pro in-ear monitors from Westone Audio.

ACROSS

1 Their biggest hit was Come And Get It (9)
7 Alexei Sayle asked, 'Ullo John! Gotta ----------? (3, 5)
12 Harlem Stride pianist Willie Smith's nom de guerre, The ---- (4)
14 Zappa's were Cheap (7)
18 Dr Dre's smoking mixture from '92 (3, 7)
19 See 33 across (2)
20 Curious '99 Robert Wyatt comp (3)
21 Ed Sheeran's song for Ms Nesbitt (4)
22 Bill Ryder-Jones tries to stay awake? (4)
24 Sly's little sister (3)
26 Bran Van 3000, feeling happy in '98 (4)
28 Cilla Black covers Joe South in '68 (2,2)
29 The Crystals critique the rat race in '62 (6)
30 Mike Love's peace-loving 2023 LP (3,3)
31 See photoclue A (4,7)
33 and **19**a 1925 Ted Lewis song later covered by Paul Whiteman (2)
36 Todd Rundgren's better world (6)
37 Neil Young's "uptight city in the smog" (1,1)
38 Kris Kristofferson's anti-music critic song, Eddie The ------ (6)
40 AKA Sami Takamäki from Hanoi Rocks (3,5)
42 The label Pye regenerated into (1,1,1)
43 Pylon's 1980 debut (6)
44 Genre pioneered in Washington DC by Rites Of Spring and Embrace (3)
47 Joan Baez and Phil Ochs' former label (8)
49 'Soul Queen of New Orleans' Ms Thomas (4)
50 Laurie Anderson and Black Lace both saluted this caped hero (8)
52 Atoms For Peace go berserk (4)
53 Andrew Hill, discerning in 1964 (8)
55 DeBarge, Loco or Camino (2)
57 The Cranberries' were *Faithful* (8)
61 PiL/Damned man Mr. Edmonds (2)
62 Durutti Column/Nightmares On Wax-affiliated trip-hop hitmakers (5)
63 Cleotha, Mavis, Pervis and Yvonne called him Pops (7,7)
65 See photoclue B (6)
66 Punkers --------Kinney (7)
70 AKA Marc & The Mambas (5,1,3,6)
71 Floyd LP cover starring a cow (4,5,6)

DOWN

1 Splish splash! It's Nilsson's song of the morning-after from *Aerial Ballet* (4)
2 Alec Empire's label (1,1,1)
3 The Smiths were Still --- (3)
4 The *River* Augustus Pablo was *East* of (4)
5 AKA Christian music, sung in church (6)
6 -- Vogue, -Tact or *Vivo!* (2)
8 Campo de ------, where Jimmy Webb longed to live (6)
9 After At The Drive-In, The… (4,5)
10 See photoclue C (4,6)
11 Elton hit covered by Kate Bush, Neil Diamond and William Shatner (6,3)
13 Stadium of great Beatles renown (4)
15 Alt version of The Beach Boys' I Know There's An Answer (4,2,2,4,3)
16 Pet Clark's post-Downtown hit (1,4,1,5)
22 Troubled rapper's 2018 LP (2)
23 Fugee ------ Jean (6)
25 They had a hit with Please Don't Go in 1992 (1,1,1)
26 Frankie Valli sang the theme to this '78 movie smash (6)
27 PJ Proby, unknowable in '66 (6)
32 Diamanda Galás, live in 1990 (6,4)
34 Saint Etienne's *Good* mood (5)
35 Port Glasgow's electronic eminence (6,4)
39 German cabaret singer Ms. Lemper (3)
41 Their hits included Excitable and Too Good To Be Forgotten (7)
42 Brighton band led by Boring Bob Grover (8)
45 Producer of David McWilliams, Marianne Faithfull, The Glitter Band and more (4,7)
46 Dusty Springfield's brooch? (5)
48 Cobblestone Jazz go psychedelic in 2007 (3)
51 Early-'80s anti-fascist label (1,1,1)
54 Kaiser Chiefs in waterfowl play? (4)
56 Big Hard Excellent Fish's was Imperfect (4)
58 Miles live in Japan, 1975 (7)
59 In guitar terms, the same as Whammy (7)
60 Tom Jones song and Welsh rugby anthem (7)
62 The age of Shaky's House (3)
64 Folktronica alias of United Bible Studies' Michael Tanner (6)
67 Chess label great ---- James (4)
68 Just in time, Tangerine Dream's third (4)
69 Burnham, Montenegro or Nicholson? (4)

Getty (3)

In deep water: Slint (from left) Todd Brashear, Britt Walford, Brian McMahan and David Pajo get wet during the cover shoot for 1991's *Spiderland* album.

David Pajo and Slint

It began with doing something different in Louisville. And ended when a soul-baring singer had to get out.

HELLO SUMMER 1986

Before Slint, the drummer Britt [Walford] and I had a band called Maurice in Louisville, Kentucky. I was replacing Brian McMahan who also played guitar with Squirrel Bait, who were kind of taking off. I was already a huge fan – I didn't know Britt really, then I showed up at the first practice and I knew all their songs. I have a tape of that first practice and it's crazy. We'd never played together but we had this almost jazz, psychic connection, where I would throw in this lick and he would throw in a drum fill at the same time and they'd be exactly in sync. I guess the Louisville punk scene kind of recognised me as a musician when I started playing in Maurice, because it was total shredding, show-off, heavy extreme guitar. The last Maurice song, a song I wrote called New Dave, was all clean guitars, it was melodic – justifiably, the singer, who was more of a punk singer, was like, "I can't sing to this." So the band broke up.

Me and Britt, our only criteria was to do something different, so I introduced Britt to Ethan [Buckler, first Slint bassist]. The first song we worked on was New Dave and then we started writing songs with Ethan, and it became Slint. Our first show was at a Unitarian church and we literally played on the altar. Brian was there, recording the show on this little microcassette. I was sure that he'd hated the new Maurice because I played everything that he played, but in my own '80s hair-metal way, but he'd loved it. We always wanted another guitar player, and Brian was, you know, perfect. We first tried out Will Oldham, but he only knew, like, D and G open chords and we were already doing more intricate stuff. It wasn't like he failed! He was just too new to guitar.

GOODBYE NOVEMBER 1990

I thought we were just starting. Brian and I had worked on the layout for the artwork for *Spiderland* [second album, released March 1991]. We were working on a tour in England, which would have been great. Then he just sat us down and said he was worried about what he was going to do in the future, how he'd make money, he might have kids someday… and we were literally just still kids! He didn't see a future in Slint, basically. It was a shock when he left, absolutely.

I'm sure he was really frustrated with me and Britt specifically because we were kind of loose. I would show up at practice two hours late. We knew he was going through some relationship stuff, but we never talked about that kind of stuff, which is a shame [McMahan checked himself into hospital immediately after *Spiderland*'s recording]. It seemed like a good thing, like he was taking care of himself. He did bare his soul on *Spiderland*. Steve Albini said when he first heard Washer he felt extreme embarrassment for Brian. After his second listen, he realised it was the saddest song you'd ever heard.

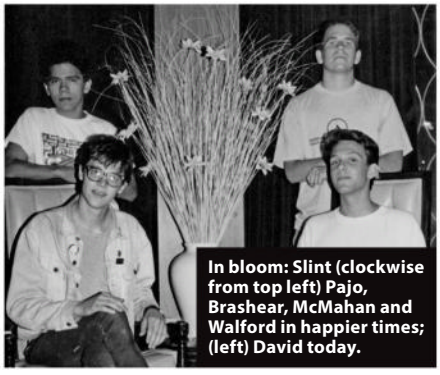
I'd been playing in bands for six or seven years, and it was the only time I felt like, OK, this is my band, the one band I'm serious about. I really couldn't listen to *Spiderland* after that. It wasn't until a decade later that I could start to appreciate it. I don't know if the other guys realised how cherished Slint had become until that first reunion tour [in 2005]. I don't think it really sank in until we played in Italy, where we're playing Washer and Brian had to stop singing because the audience was singing along so loud he couldn't hear himself. Even today, if someone tells me they like Slint, I'm usually taken aback. My vision was that the only people that would have heard of us in 10 years would be, like, free jazz aficionados that own multiple Victrolas.

As told to Victoria Segal

The Children's Hour's Going Home is out now on Sea Note.

Sebastian Mlynarski

"We had this almost jazz, psychic connection… exactly in sync."
DAVID PAJO



In bloom: Slint (clockwise from top left) Pajo, Brashear, McMahan and Walford in happier times; (left) David today.

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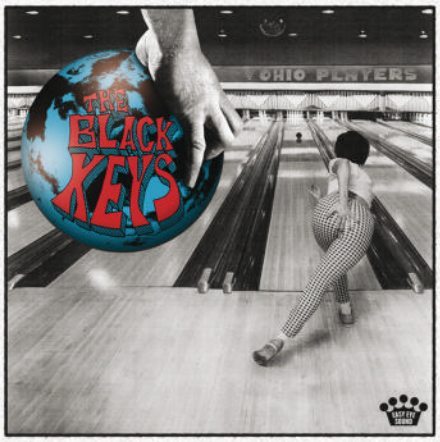

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